

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1875.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT."

CHAPTER XVI.

FASCINATION.

A FEW days after the private interview between Mr. Van Duren and his lodger, Mr. Billing, the lawyer, called on Mr. Byrne by appointment, and took down that gentleman's instructions with respect to the disposition of his property. Three days later, Mr. Billing called with the all-important document, and found waiting to receive him in Mr. Byrne's parlour, the testator himself, Mr. Van Duren, who had most kindly consented to act as one of the executors, and a certain Mr. Dexter, an old personal friend of Mr. Byrne, who was to act as executor number two.

Then, at the testator's request, the will was read aloud by Mr. Billing. By its provisions Mr. Byrne bequeathed, equally between his son Gerald and his daughter Miriam, the whole of his property, amounting in the aggregate to thirty thousand pounds, the same being partly invested in government three per cents., and partly in the shares of certain railways and other public companies. When the reading was over, Mr. Byrne put his signature to the will in a hand that was remarkably firm and clear for his age. The two executors then appended their signatures. Mr. Billing took charge of the document, and the ceremony was at an end. After that, a couple of bottles of old port were produced, the testator's health was drunk, then there was a little hand-shaking and the expression of many good wishes, and after that the three gentlemen went away, and Mr. Byrne was left to solitude and his own thoughts.

His own thoughts, such as they might be, seemed of an eminently satisfactory nature. Miriam was out—had been sent out purposely during the process of will-signing. Thus it fell out that Mr. Byrne now found himself temporarily deprived of the services of his daughter.

But that did not trouble him in the least. He liked to be waited upon—as most men do—but he was not above looking after his own comforts when there was no one else to do it for him. All through life he had been in the habit of celebrating any pleasant little event, or successful stroke of business, by taking something “on the strength of it,” as he termed it; and it was hardly likely that he should pretermit such an excellent observance on the present occasion. Accordingly, he no sooner found himself alone than he proceeded to charge and light the inevitable pipe, and to mix for himself the inevitable tumbler of grog. With his chair tilted back on its hind legs, his feet on the table, his wig awry, his pipe in his mouth, and his steaming glass before him, Mr. Byrne was quietly meditating over the day’s proceedings, when, without any preliminary knock, the door that gave egress on to the landing was quietly opened, and the head of Pringle, Mr. Van Duren’s clerk, was thrust into the room. His glassy eyes fixed themselves on Byrne, but without any apparent sign of intelligence lighting up their dull depths. For a few seconds the two men stared at each other without speaking. Byrne was, in fact, too much taken aback to utter a word. “Beg pardon. I thought the governor was here,” said Pringle at last. “See he isn’t. Sorry to intrude.” With that he withdrew his head and shut the door very softly.

“That drunken fool has seen enough to spoil everything!” cried Byrne, as he started to his feet. “What an ass I must have been not to lock the door! My only chance is that he may have had so much to drink as to have forgotten all about what he saw by to-morrow morning.”

Pringle having shut the door of Mr. Byrne’s room, stood still on the mat, while he indulged in one of his noiseless, malicious laughs. “I thought the old boy was after some private little game of his own,” he said; “and I thought I shouldn’t be long before I spotted him. A disguise—eh? And no more deaf, I’ll swear, than I am! Haven’t I listened at the keyhole, and heard him and the girl talking quite natural and easylike? And then Van Duren’s sweet on the girl, but the girl looks too wide awake to be sweet on him, without she thinks him rich and wants a husband. I can’t make out just yet what it all means, but, anyhow, I don’t think it means much good to Van Duren; and so long as it don’t mean any good to him I sha’n’t interfere. I’ll watch and say nothing, and if I only find that the pair of them are weaving a net round Van Duren, won’t I give them a helping hand! That is,” he added, as if suddenly correcting himself, “that is, provided it don’t interfere with my own little game.”

He went slowly downstairs to the office on the ground-floor. The gas was lighted, but there was no one in the room. “Van Duren and Billing have gone out together. If Van thinks I’m going to wait for him, he’s mistaken. I’ll just shut up shop, and go to tea. Now, what

could Van and the other one want in the old boy's room upstairs? That's a puzzler. Is there some little game on that they are all mixed up in? Or are Van and the other trying to best the old 'un? Or is the old 'un trying to best Van and the other one?" Shaking his head as though the questions he had put to himself were beyond his powers of solution, he took a ledger under each arm and carried them slowly downstairs—all Pringle's movements were slow—into the fire-proof room in the basement of the house, where Van Duren's books and papers were habitually kept.

This fire-proof room was on the same floor as the rooms inhabited by Bakewell and his wife, who had charge of the whole premises, but was separated from them by a brick passage of some length. Opposite the foot of the stairs was a door that opened into this passage, in which a tiny jet of gas was kept burning through the day. At the end of the passage was a strong iron door, which opened into the fire-proof room. There was only one key to this door, and that was kept by Van Duren himself. But it was part of Bakewell's duties to go up to his master's bedroom every morning, obtain the key in question, open the door—which was allowed to stand open all day—lock it again at ten o'clock at night, and take back the key to his master's bedroom. When Van Duren went out of town, which he did frequently, the key was given in charge of Pringle. The key of the safe itself never left Van Duren's possession for more than a few minutes at a time. A small, square apartment, with a bricked roof, and fitted up with shelves and book-racks, with sundry boxes in one corner, and in the other a large patent safe: such was Mr. Van Duren's fire-proof room. Like the passage that led to it, it was entirely shut out from daylight, and the gas was kept burning in all day long.

When Pringle had deposited the ledgers in their proper places, he turned the gas a little higher, and then stood for a few moments listening intently. Not a sound broke the silence. "If one was buried six feet deep in the earth, one couldn't be quieter than one is here," said Pringle, with a shudder. "It's just like a vault, particularly when one knows that there's nothing but dead men's bones all round. No fear of an interruption," he added. "Bakewell's out, and his wife ain't overfond of this part of the house."

His next proceeding was a very singular one. From an inner pocket of his waistcoat he extracted a key, which key he proceeded to insert into the lock of the patent safe in the corner. "Not quite the thing yet," he muttered, as he tried the key. "Wants another touch of the file here and there. Grainger's three thousand will fall due in about a month's time. I must have everything ready by then. It's sure not to be all in bills. There will be a few hundreds in gold. Then there will be Van's private stock, and other things. Altogether, a pretty little haul."

He withdrew the key from the lock and put it back into his secret pocket. "If he had not treated me like a dog, if he had treated me as one man ought to treat another, I should never have thought of this thing. He thinks that he has me in his power, and that I dare not turn; but he will find himself mistaken. I'm not quite a worm, though he tramples on me as if I were. He will find that I can turn, and sting too, when the proper time comes."

He went back upstairs, turned down the gas in the office, and taking his hat and his faded gingham umbrella, left the house.

Jonas Pringle was from fifty to fifty-five years old. He was bald, except for a straggling fringe of hair round the back of his head, and had weak, watery eyes, that gave him the appearance, to strangers, of being habitually in tears. He always dressed in black, and always wore an old-fashioned tail-coat. But his black clothes were never otherwise than very shabby and threadbare, and shiny with old age at the elbows and knees. He wore a thick black-silk neckcloth, above which peered the frayed edge of a dirty collar. Among Pringle's intimates at the Pig and Whistle (his favourite evening haunt) there was a story current that he had not had a new hat for twenty years.

This evening he went mooning slowly along the streets, muttering under his breath, as was his habit, and glancing up with a queer, sudden stare into the face of every woman that passed him. Years before, he had lost his daughter, an only child: lost her, that is, in the sense of her being stolen from him by a villain. It was a fixed article of Pringle's belief that he should one day find his daughter again, and he had got into the habit, when walking along the streets, of looking into the face of each woman that he met, ever hoping that among them he might some time see again the face of his lost Jessie.

It was quite impossible for Pringle to get as far as his lodgings without making one or two calls for refreshment by the way. There were certain houses where his face was as well known as that of a regular frequenter, and where they knew, without his having to be at the trouble of asking for it, the particular article (twopennyworth of gin, neat) with which to supply him. "He's been at it again," remarked Pringle, parenthetically, to the landlord of one of the dirty little taverns which he favoured with his patronage. "He was raving about all morning like a bear with a sore head. Nothing pleased him, nothing one could do was right."

"Ay, ay. I shouldn't stand it if I was you," answered the publican.

"I sha'n't stand it much longer; you may take your oath of that," said Pringle. "There'll be a day of reckoning before long: mark my words, if there ain't."

About the very time that Jonas Pringle was giving utterance to this mysterious threat, the man to whom he referred was sitting alone,

thinking deeply—thinking of Miriam Byrne, of her manifold charms of fortune and person, and trying to screw up his courage to the point of asking her to become his wife. He had fully made up his mind that he would so ask her, but he wished with all his heart that the task were well over. In all business transactions he was one of the most prompt and decisive of men, and, it may be added, one of the hardest ; but the thought of having to tell this dark-eyed beauty of twenty that he loved her and would fain marry her, fluttered his nerves strangely. That it must be done, and done soon, he had quite made up his mind ; but none the less did the thought of having it to do trouble him. To old Byrne he had thrown out one or two hints already, and had not been repulsed. In fact, the old man seemed desirous of seeing his daughter comfortably settled in life, and would perhaps be more likely to encourage the addresses of a man like Van Duren, who knew the world and the value of money, rather than those of some empty-headed popinjay of Miriam's own age, who would, in all probability, first spend her fortune and then neglect her. Ah ! if he could only win her for himself—win her and her fortune too—what a happy stroke of luck that would be ! He admired the girl for her beauty, admired her more than any woman he had ever met before, and even if she had not been worth a penny, he might in some moment of rashness have flung all other considerations to the winds, and have asked her to marry him. But knowing what he knew about her, would he not have been an idiot to have let such a golden opportunity slip through his fingers without trying to grasp it and claim it for his own ? “ If I can find a chance of doing so, I'll propose to her to-morrow,” he said to himself, emphatically, as he rose from the table. “ I cannot afford to lose another day.”

At seven o'clock next evening Mr. Van Duren knocked at the door of his lodgers' sitting-room. His summons was answered by Miriam in person. He started with surprise as his eyes fell on her. He had never seen her dressed as she was to-night. Anyone might have thought that she knew he was going to call upon her, that she suspected what he had made up his mind to say. Had she deliberately laid herself out to fascinate him, to enthrall his senses, to make him forget reason and prudence and all the cautious rules with which his life had heretofore been hedged round, she could not, with all her thought, have done more towards effecting that end than the caprice of a moment was likely to do for her without thought at all. And it was but the whim of a moment that had induced her to attire herself after the fashion in which she presented herself to the eyes of Van Duren to-night.

She wore a long, trailing robe of amber silk, which fitted her very loosely, and was fastened round her waist with a gay Persian scarf of many colours. The sleeves of this dress were cut very short, and Miriam's bare arms were decorated with bracelets of tiny, tinted shells

and small coins intermixed. A fringe of coins was bound round her forehead, and fastened at the back with a gilt arrow. Her hair fell to her waist in two long plaits, with which more coins and shells were intermixed. As she walked across the room, and as she reclined on the sofa, the tips of two Turkish slippers, embroidered with gold thread and silks of various colours, could be seen peeping from under the edge of her robe. In her ears hung two tiny bells, that looked like gold, but were only gilt, which tinkled faintly when she moved her head; round her throat was clasped a double string of large amber beads.

"Good evening, Miss Byrne," said Van Duren, as soon as he recovered his presence of mind. "I have had a small consignment of fruit from France, and I have ventured to hope that you would do me the favour of accepting a box of it."

"You are kindness itself," said Miriam. "But don't stand there, please." Then, when she had shut the door behind him, she added: "How you have so quickly found out two of my pet weaknesses—flowers and candied fruits—is more than I can understand." Then she took the box from his hand. "Many, many thanks. Why, the casket itself is quite a work of art."

Van Duren crossed to where Mr. Byrne was sitting in his easy-chair by the fire. He had neither spoken nor stirred from the moment of hearing the knock at the door. Van Duren laid his hand on the old man's shoulder. "How are you this evening, Mr. Byrne?" he said, speaking close to the other one's ear.

"Oh, hearty, hearty: never better," answered Byrne, in a querulous voice. "If it wasn't for this nasty cough, and this pain in my side, and one or two other trifles, I should be as right as a trivet."

"We shall soon have the warm weather here now, and that will help you along."

"Of course it will. In another month's time I shall be out and about again, as strong and active as a young lion."

"Poor papa never will allow that he is worse," said Miriam, in a low voice. "He has certainly been weaker and feebler for the last day or two, but he will persist in saying that he is quite the opposite."

"The old boy can't last long," thought Van Duren to himself: "another reason why I ought not to delay."

Next minute, without hardly knowing how it happened, he found himself sitting opposite Miriam, who had resumed her favourite position—a half-sitting, half-reclining one—on the sofa, and was eating daintily a sugared apricot. How round and white her arms looked, contrasted against the deep amber of her robe, from under which the tiny Turkish slippers peeped tantalizingly! She was certainly very lovely, but about her loveliness to-night there was something wild and weird that at once attracted to itself a certain element of savagery that lay latent in the

character of her admirer, but which the quiet, humdrum life he had led of late years had all but buried out of sight. An Englishman of the timid conventional type would either have been repelled or frightened had he seen the lady of his love decked out after Miriam's strange fashion, but it only served to draw Van Duren more closely to her. It seemed to him that, could he but have had his own way in the matter, he would never have let her dress otherwise than as he saw her to-night. As he gazed at her, all the pulses of his being seemed to throb with newer life. His eyes brightened, the lines of his hard mouth softened, and for once, as Miriam avowed afterwards to her father, the man looked almost handsome.

Miriam's guitar was resting against the sofa, within reach of her hand. Said Van Duren: "You were singing and playing, the other evening, Miss Byrne, as I went upstairs to my own room, but I have never had the pleasure of hearing you when in your company."

"Then you ought to consider yourself very fortunate," replied Miriam, "for I am really not worth listening to."

"Will you give me an opportunity of judging for myself?"

"If you put it as a definite request, of course I cannot refuse you. I have accepted your bribe beforehand," she added, with a smile, pointing to the box of fruit.

"I should really like to hear you."

"Then you shall hear me. After that you will be satisfied. You will never want to hear me again."

"That's as it may be," said Van Duren, as he drew his chair a couple of inches nearer the sofa.

"What shall I murder for you?" asked Miriam, as she took up the guitar.

The phrase was an ugly one, and had been spoken without thought. Van Duren started as if some one had smitten him suddenly from behind. He shot a look full of suspicion and terror at Miriam, but her eyes were bent on the guitar, one or two strings of which seemed to want screwing up.

"What shall I sing for you?" she said, amending her phraseology this time.

Van Duren recovered himself with an effort. "The guitar has always been associated in my mind," he said, "with love-songs and serenades, with moonlight and romance."

"Then here's a little serenade for you. I, who sing, am supposed to be a cavalier. If your imagination will carry you so far, you can fancy yourself to be the lady thus lovingly addressed." She struck a chord or two on the guitar, and began as follows:

"What throbs through the song of the nightingale?

What makes the red heart of the rose turn pale?

Love, burning love.

What makes me grow drowsy 'neath midsummer skies?
 What makes me a slave to my lady's dark eyes?
 Love, burning love."

One verse will be quite enough for the reader. Miriam's voice was a rich, clear contralto, which she managed with considerable skill. Now and again as she sang, she shot a glance out of her dangerous black eyes at the rapt listener sitting opposite to her. Her father, in the easy-chair by the fire, gave no further sign of existence than by the troublesome cough which seized him every few minutes and shook him like a leaf.

As the last line thrilled from Miriam's lips, Van Duren sank down on one knee before her, and tried to seize her hand. With a little involuntary shudder, she drew it away from him. Then he grasped a fold of her dress and pressed it passionately to his lips. "Miriam! Miriam! do not repulse me, but listen to me!" he cried. "You who can give such passionate expression to the words of a mere love-song must have felt and known that I loved you from the first moment that I saw you. I cannot ask or expect that you should give me back such a love as I now offer you. But try to like me a little—consent to be my wife—and I will do all that lies in the power of mortal man to make you happy!"

"Oh, Mr. Van Duren, you do indeed surprise me!" was all Miriam said: but she was not surprised in the least.

"I am richer than the world gives me credit for being," pursued Van Duren. "I have led a quiet, saving life for years, but all that shall be changed if you will only become mine. I can afford to let my wife live as a lady ought to live—I can afford to ——"

"Oh, Mr. Van Duren, you must not talk in that way."

"I am quite aware," he pleaded, "that there is a very wide difference between your age and mine, but ——"

"That would make no difference in my feelings towards anyone for whom I really cared."

"If you would only try to care a little for me!"

"It all seems so strange, Mr. Van Duren."

"What is it that seems so strange, dearest?"

"Why, that a man like you, who has seen so much of the world, who must have seen and known so many ladies both in England and abroad, should really profess to care about a foolish, frivolous girl like me."

"You are neither foolish nor frivolous. Besides which, you are different from anyone whom I ever met before. More than all, you are my fate."

"Your fate, Mr. Van Duren!"

"Yes, the one woman out of all the wide world whom, uncounted ages ago, it was fated, or fore-ordained, that I should love."

"Now you are going further than I can follow you," said Miriam,

with a smile. "Perhaps, at the same time, it was fore-ordained that I should reject your suit."

"You do not know how terribly in earnest I am, or you would not laugh at me."

"Indeed, Mr. Van Duren, I am not laughing at you. But pray resume your seat."

"Not till you have told me the best or the worst. Not till you have given me some word of hope, or told me that I must never hope again."

"Mr. Van Duren," said Miriam, with more earnestness than she had yet used, "your offer has come upon me so suddenly that I know not what to say. I think you can hardly expect me to give you an answer to so serious a question without giving me time to consider what that answer must be. Not now, not to-night—can I answer you either one way or the other. Two or three days at the least I must claim, to think over all that you have said to me, and to discover, if it be possible for me to do so, what my feelings are in a matter that concerns my future welfare so closely."

"I can but bow to your decision," said Van Duren. "I hope I may accept it as a good augury that you have not rejected my suit at once and entirely; that you have deemed it worthy of being taken into consideration."

"Ah, Mr. Duren, I am afraid that you are not such a novice as you would wish to make out: I am afraid that you understand more of our sex and their ways than you would care to have known."

Then, as if to close the subject, she took up her guitar and began to play. A few moments later Van Duren took his leave.

"Very well managed, my dear," said Mr. Byrne, approvingly, wheeling round his chair as soon as the door was closed upon their visitor; "only neither of you seemed to think much about me in the matter."

"I suppose Mr. Van Duren thinks that if he can obtain my consent, yours will follow as a matter of course."

"He is welcome to think what he likes, so long as you succeed in getting out of him the particular information that I want. So far, all has gone off well. In three days' time you will accept him provisionally—accept him on trial, that is, for a month or six weeks before finally binding yourself to anything. In the course of that month you ought to be able to worm out of him the all-important secret, without which all that we have done up to the present time will be of no avail whatever."

"I understand perfectly what you want, papa, but I cannot tell you how utterly distasteful to me is the whole wretched business."

"Tut, tut, girl, you mustn't talk in that way! Think of the two hundred pounds that will be yours—absolutely your own—if we succeed."

"I do think of it, papa. But even that can hardly reconcile me at times to go through with what I have promised. You don't know the feeling of repulsion, of absolute loathing, that came over me to-night when that man tried to take my hand. Think what it is to be made love to by a murderer: think of this, and pity me!"

"Of course I pity you, and feel for you," said the old man, soothingly. "But our needs are great, and the money will be very useful—you can't but admit that."

"Oh yes, I admit that. But I was never afraid of poverty."

"I am not afraid of it—but I certainly don't like it. But what do you intend doing with your two hundred pounds, Miriam? Better let me invest it for you."

"If I succeed in getting the two hundred pounds—which at present is by no means certain—I shall ——"

"Yes: what?"

"I shall furnish a couple of rooms—furnish them very nicely, mind you—and marry James."

"You will!" gasped the old man.

"I shall, most certainly. It is the thought of that and nothing else that strengthens me to go through with this dreadful business. No meaner prize would tempt me."

She stooped and kissed her father lightly on the forehead, and then went quickly out of the room as if afraid that what she had said might provoke a discussion that would have been unpleasant to both of them.

CHAPTER XVII.

EASTER HOLIDAYS.

THE Easter holidays were here, and Sir Thomas Dudgeon and family had gone down to Stammers for a fortnight. The baronet was like a boy released for awhile from the tyranny of school. He had always loved the country, but never had it seemed so sweet and pleasant to him as it did now after he had been penned up for a couple of months in the great wilderness of London. He spent hours with Cozzard every day, and together the two men visited every nook and corner of the property, and renewed acquaintance with every horse, dog, and cow on the estate. Sir Thomas's speech on the Sugar Duties, being a maiden effort, had been listened to with kindly attention by the House, and had been commented on in favourable terms by one or two of the morning papers. Amplified and embellished with tropes and similes not found in the original, it had been printed, in extenso, in the *Pembridge Gazette*, and had formed the basis of a ponderous leader in the editor's best style. Sir Thomas began to feel as if he were a power

in the realm. Really, as he sometimes whispered to himself, his wife's estimate of his abilities might not be such an exaggerated one, after all. He had been complimented so often about his speech, that, insensibly to himself, he began to regard it as being altogether his own composition, and to forget or ignore Pomeroy's share in the transaction.

The ball at Stammars came off in due course, and was very successful. It added greatly to the popularity of Sir Thomas among his constituents. Husbands and fathers in Pembridge were as amenable to feminine influences as they are supposed to be elsewhere, and Lady Dudgeon judged rightly that all the ladies would work for her after she had hinted that a similar gathering would probably be held at Stammars every year during Sir Thomas's parliamentary career.

Lady Dudgeon's correspondence had got greatly into arrears during her two months in London. As soon as the ball was over she devoted a week to letter-writing. She had many things to write about, and she did not spare any of her numerous correspondents. She had much to say respecting the fashions and foibles of society in town, the drier details being plentifully garnished with gossip and anecdotes respecting mutual friends, or such notabilities of the day as her ladyship might have been brought into casual contact with in the course of a ten minutes' crush on an aristocratic staircase. But the ball and its eccentricities were not forgotten; and could certain of the Pembridge ladies have seen how mercilessly their "dear Lady Dudgeon" ridiculed them in her letters to her fine friends—their manners, their conversation, and their toilettes—they would never have forgiven her to the last day of their lives.

Captain Dayrell came down for the ball and stayed the remainder of the week at Stammars. Neither he nor Lady Dudgeon had given up the campaign as hopeless. It was part of the captain's creed that young ladies, especially in matters matrimonial, did not know their own minds for a week at a time. Because he had been refused in March, that was no reason why he should not be accepted in April or May. He had felt considerably annoyed when Lady Dudgeon had told him the result of her conversation with Miss Lloyd. He hinted to her pretty plainly that she had committed an egregious blunder in broaching the subject to Eleanor at all, instead of leaving him to fight his own battle with that somewhat obstinate young person. "A meddling old cat" was the term he applied to her in his own thoughts. To do her justice, however, her ladyship was laudably anxious to atone for her error; therefore was Captain Dayrell invited down to Stammars, where he would have the field entirely to himself: even Mr. Pomeroy would be out of the way, Sir Thomas having given that gentleman a week's release from his not very onerous duties.

"You will have to do your spiriting very gently, Captain Dayrell," said her ladyship. "Miss Lloyd's refusal was a very decisive one."

"So long as there is no prior attachment—and you assure me that there is not—I will not permit myself to despair," said Dayrell. "I tell your ladyship this in confidence. But if it could in any way be hinted to Miss Lloyd that I have accepted her decision as final, and while deeply hurt by her rejection of me, have no intention of troubling her further, I think my cause might be greatly benefited thereby."

"Pardon me, but I hardly see the force of your suggestion."

"My dear Lady Dudgeon, it is a characteristic of your sex to regard a rejected suitor with a certain amount of tendresse. They say to themselves, 'Here is something that might be mine if I would only hold out my hand to take it.' So long as it is there for the having, they don't care to accept it; but when they have reason to think that they are about to lose it they will sometimes make a snatch at it rather than let it go altogether—or perhaps I ought to say, rather than let it fall into the hands of another."

In this matter Captain Dayrell judged Eleanor by himself. He was twice as anxious to win her now that she had declined his attentions as he had been before. Not that he would ever have dreamed of asking Miss Lloyd to become his wife had she been other than the heiress she was. He knew too well what was due both to himself and to society.

The suggested hint was duly given to Eleanor. It made her intercourse with Captain Dayrell, during his stay at Stammars, more easy and pleasant than it might otherwise have been, but beyond that it had no effect whatever. When the captain went back to town he was not quite so sanguine of success as he had been a week previously; but being of a persevering disposition, and having no belief in the immutability of a woman's No, he was still very far from considering his case as hopeless.

Olive Deane had three days' leave of absence from her duties at Easter. She went by invitation to spend the time with her aunt and cousin at Pembridge. She had seen neither of them during the two months she had been at Lady Dudgeon's. Matthew Kelvin had once or twice sent his chief clerk to transact business with the baronet, but had never put in an appearance himself. Could it be that he dreaded the possibility of meeting Miss Lloyd? was the question Olive sometimes asked herself; but it was a question to which there was no likelihood of her ever obtaining an answer.

Olive's heart fluttered strangely as she knocked at the familiar door. Absence had in no wise weakened her love for her cousin. Watered with her secret tears, its roots seemed only to grow stronger and to cling more tightly round her heart. "Why should my life be made miserable for the love of this man?" she sometimes asked herself. "He cares nothing for me. He never will care anything for me!" But in other moods she would say: "He will learn to love me yet."

Such a love as mine must have a magnetism in it strong enough to draw to itself the object of its desires."

But how was it possible that her cousin could grow to love her when she was separated from him by weeks and months of absence? She must devise some scheme that would bring her under the same roof with him again: that was her only chance. Once let Miss Lloyd become engaged either to Mr. Pomeroy or Captain Dayrell—once let Matthew Kelvin realize the fact that, safe in the love of another man, Eleanor was for ever beyond his reach, and she—Olive—would not stop another day at Stammars. Some excuse she would find, some reason she would invent, which would make her once more an inmate of her cousin's house. Now, to-day, when she took her aunt's hand and kissed her, she peered anxiously into her face to read whatever signs might be written there. Was her health much worse than usual? Was there any prospect that before long this poor ailing creature might need her services as nurse? Surely—surely, she could not linger on in this way for ever! She wished no harm to her aunt, but one cannot always help one's thoughts. To-day, however, Mrs. Kelvin looked pretty much as she had looked for the last three or four years: neither better nor worse.

She received her niece very kindly. Matthew was out on business, so there was time for an hour's confidential talk before he came back. One of Mrs. Kelvin's first questions had reference to Mr. Pomeroy: was he comfortable, and did he suit Sir Thomas? Then she was interested in hearing Olive's account of the gay doings in London, and genuinely pleased to find that Lady Dudgeon and her niece agreed so well together.

After that the old lady began to talk about her son. There had been a change in him of late, and it troubled her. He was not bodily ill, she thought; but he seemed to have something on his mind. He was restless and irritable, and seemed to crave for company and excitement more than he had ever done before. When he was talking about one thing he always seemed to be thinking about another. "He has not read a line to me for I don't know how long," sighed the old lady. "I can see that his heart is not in it, and so I don't care to ask him."

Mr. Kelvin came in while they were still talking about him. His face brightened the moment he saw Olive, and her heart whispered to her, "He is glad to see me!" He shook hands with her, and patted her cheek as he might have done that of a child. "Your roses were always white ones, Olive," he said, "and London smoke has certainly done nothing to turn them into red ones."

Olive's anxious eyes were not long in verifying what Mrs. Kelvin had said about her son. He certainly looked more worn and anxious than she had ever seen him look before. He seemed to have grown five years older in a few weeks. "Will he tell me, I wonder, what has gone

amiss with him?" whispered Olive to herself. "Can his anxiety have anything to do with Eleanor Lloyd? or is it common business cares that are troubling his mind?"

From whatever cause Mr. Kelvin's anxiety might spring, he made an effort this evening to put it behind him, and partly succeeded in so doing. He assumed a cheerfulness if he felt it not, and his mother was only too ready to believe that it was genuine. It struck Olive, however, that she had never seen her cousin drink so much brandy-and-water as he did this evening, and then he would finish up with champagne, toasting Olive in one bumper and his mother in another. After that he went out for a stroll and a whiff in the quiet streets, and had not come back when the ladies retired for the night. "Your coming, dear, seems to have done Matthew good," said Mrs. Kelvin to Olive as she kissed her at her bedroom door. "I have not seen him so bright and cheerful for weeks as he has been to-night. But I daresay my company is a little dull for him at times, and the house would be all the brighter for him if you could be here always."

If she could be there always! How the words rang in Olive's ears when shut up in the solitude of her own room! She could not go to bed till she heard Matthew come in, so she put out the candle and drew up the blind, and sat gazing out at the chilly stars till she heard her cousin's footsteps on the stairs.

Mrs. Kelvin never came down to breakfast, a fact of which Olive was aware. She judged that if her cousin had anything particular to say to her he would say it when his mother was out of the way, so she took care to be down to breakfast betimes next morning. Kelvin was moody and distrait. After a little commonplace conversation he lapsed into a silence that seemed deeper than common, and one which Olive did not care to break.

"Do you see much of Miss Lloyd?" he said at last, with a suddenness that was almost startling.

"I see her nearly every day—generally at luncheon," said Olive, quite calmly. She had expected some such question.

"Is she well and happy?"

"Quite well, and as far as one person may judge of another, quite happy."

Silence again for a minute or two. When Kelvin next spoke, it was with his eyes turned away from Olive. "She is young, handsome, and presumably rich, consequently not short of suitors—eh?"

"I see so little of Miss Lloyd, except at breakfast or luncheon, that I am hardly in a position to answer your question. There is, however, one gentleman who visits at the house, and who seems to be looked upon with favourable eyes both by Lady Dudgeon and Miss Lloyd."

"Ah! And who may he be?"

"His name is Captain Dayrell. He is said to be cousin to Lord Rookborough."

"Good-looking, of course?"

"Not bad-looking, certainly." Silence again.

Olive Deane knew quite well that in speaking thus of Captain Dayrell to her cousin she was not confining herself to the narrow limits of the truth. She knew quite well—for she was not blind, like Lady Dudgeon—that if the attentions of one man were more pleasant to Miss Lloyd than those of another, that man was John Pomeroy. But instinct warned her that it would not be wise on her part to mention Pomeroy's name in any such relation. That Miss Lloyd should receive the attentions of a man like Captain Dayrell would seem to her cousin no more than natural under the circumstances; but that Miss Lloyd should encourage the attentions of a penniless adventurer like Jack Pomeroy would have seemed an altogether different affair. Matthew Kelvin's pride would have revolted at the thought of Pomeroy winning that which he himself had failed to gain. He was just the man to have warned Sir Thomas, and have got Pomeroy discharged, so that the affair might be broken off; but in the case of Captain Dayrell no such mode of procedure was possible. However distasteful such a state of affairs might be to him, he could only submit to it with such grace as there might be in him.

It was characteristic of Olive Deane's crooked method of reasoning, that she fully believed that should her plot result in a marriage between Eleanor and Pomeroy, her cousin would, in time to come, be far better pleased than if no such scheme had been hatched by her busy brain. Would not Matthew Kelvin's revenge be far sweeter to him if the woman who had rejected him so contemptuously should marry an adventurer like Pomeroy, who could have no other object than her supposed wealth in trying to win her for his wife, rather than that she should become the promised bride of Captain Dayrell, who, though he should be told Miss Lloyd's real history at the last moment, might still be chivalrous enough to make her his wife? In any case, thus it was that Olive reasoned with herself, and for this reason it was that John Pomeroy's name was never mentioned by her in connection with Miss Lloyd.

"That was a devilish scheme of revenge that you suggested to me one morning in my office! I have had no peace of mind since I agreed to it."

"You talk as a woman might talk. I certainly gave you credit for more strength of purpose," said Olive, with the slightest possible touch of contempt in her voice.

"Strength of purpose has nothing to do with the point in question," he said, harshly. "For the first time in my life, I have wilfully tarnished my professional honour, and that is what annoys me so greatly."

"A few weeks more, and the necessity for concealment will be at an end. Captain Dayrell will propose to Miss Lloyd—will win her consent to become his wife. After that you can strike your blow as soon as you like."

Kelvin did not answer, but sat staring moodily into the fire. Olive regarded him furtively for a little while, without speaking.

"I certainly thought that I should have seen you at Stammars on the evening of the ball," she said, after a time.

"I had an invitation, but I did not choose to go. Too much of a tag-rag-and-bob-tail affair for me."

"Your absence was commented upon both by Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon at breakfast next morning."

"What does that matter to me?"

"Shall I tell you something else?"

"Just as you please."

"After Sir Thomas and Lady Dudgeon had left the room, I rose from the table and went and sat down for a few minutes in one of the deep window recesses. Miss Lloyd and Captain Dayrell rose too, and went towards the fire-place. I suppose from what followed that Miss Lloyd had forgotten that I was in the room. Said the captain to her: 'Who is this Mr. Kelvin, whose absence from the ball Sir Thomas seemed to regret so much?'—'Oh, a mere nobody—a provincial attorney,' answered Miss Lloyd."

"She said that, did she?" muttered Kelvin.

"Oh, by-the-by," continued the captain, 'I want to consult a lawyer on a point of business while I'm down here, and I daresay this fellow of Sir Thomas's would do as well as anybody else.'—'Yes, I should rather like you to see him, Frank,' said Miss Lloyd.—'Why him in particular?' asked the captain.—'Because this very man—this country attorney—actually had the audacity, no very long time ago, to ask me to become his wife!'—'Like his impudence,' said the captain, and then they both laughed, and left the room."

A deep flush mounted to the face of Matthew Kelvin. He got up from the table, and went and rested his two elbows on the chimney-piece, and stood gazing into the fire without speaking. The lie just told by Olive, but which he had accepted as truth, had evidently touched him to the quick. Olive, playing with her tea-spoon, watched him narrowly.

"Do you think of telling Miss Lloyd before long that she is not Miss Lloyd?" Olive ventured at last to remark.

"No, not yet—not yet!" answered Kelvin. "Now that I have kept the secret so long, it shall not be told till the eve of her marriage with this man. I leave it for you to let me know when the proper time has come. Let her suffer—as she has made me suffer."

With that he left the room. Nor, during Olive's visit, was the subject again alluded to between them.

All too soon, to Olive's thinking, did her visit come to an end. "You must steal another holiday before long," said her aunt to her as she was putting on her bonnet on the morning of her return to

Stammars. "Matthew has brightened up wonderfully while you have been here, and I can't tell you how thankful I am for it." Matthew himself kissed her as he handed her into the fly that was to take her back. He had not kissed her since that never-to-be-forgotten day at Redcar, now long years ago. How strangely her heart thrilled to the touch of his lips! "Oh! that I could be with him altogether, never to leave him more!" she murmured. She lay back in the fly and cried all the way to Stammars; but already in that crooked brain of hers the embryo of a strange, dark scheme was beginning to take shape and consistency, although as yet she herself was hardly aware of its existence.

Gerald, too, had his holiday at Easter. Not that he wanted it, or even asked for it. To know that he was under the same roof with Eleanor, even though his chances of seeing her might have been few and far between, would have been holiday enough for him. But Sir Thomas's offer was made in such a way that he could not refuse to accept it. He had no suspicion that the prime mover in the affair was Lady Dudgeon, who thought by isolating Eleanor as much as possible, she was materially increasing Captain Dayrell's chances of success.

The demon of Jealousy was tugging at Gerald's heart-strings as he left Stammars for London, and all by reason of this same captain Dayrell. He knew perfectly well that that gentleman, and he alone, had been specially invited to Stammars. He had met the captain once or twice at luncheon, and had seen enough for him to know that he might prove a most formidable rival. Before leaving Stammars he would fain have seen Eleanor, would fain have given her some hint more pointed than any he had yet given as to the state of his feelings, and have tried to win from her some sort of promise in return. But either through accident or by design, he found himself unable to see her even for five minutes; and he was compelled to go away without one word of farewell, but with the bitter knowledge—and bitter indeed it was to him—that his rival was expected to reach Stammars that very day in time for dinner.

"What may not such a man accomplish in ten days!" muttered poor Gerald to himself as he was being borne Londonwards in the train. "On the one hand, a good-looking, polished man of the world—a roué, doubtless, but how is Eleanor to know that?—full of bright talk and ready wit, and with an adaptability about him that makes him seem at home anywhere: on the other hand, an ardent, impressionable girl, bred in the country, lacking in knowledge of the world and its ways, with a sort of high-flown sentiment about her which Dayrell would know at once how to twist to his own advantage. In an encounter such as this, which of the two is likely to come off victor?"

Of a truth, poor Gerald was very miserable. He did not know, as we know, that he had himself supplied Eleanor with a suit of invisible

armour, welded by Love's deft fingers, which would have rendered her proof against the assaults of a hundred Captain Dayrells. He blamed himself in that he had not yet told her of his love—told her by word of mouth—not dreaming that he had already told it in divers other ways, with a silent eloquence which is often more persuasive and powerful than any words.

Gerald spent three days in London with Miss Bellamy and Ambrose Murray. Then he ran over to Paris with a view of seeking a little distraction among his old acquaintances in that gay city. But nothing could distract him for long at a time from his own jaundiced thoughts. The image of Captain Dayrell was a nightmare to him during the hours of darkness, and as a black shadow that never ceased to haunt his footsteps by day. His light-hearted Parisian friends told him that he was one of them no longer, that English fog had so permeated his system that there was no longer any *esprit* left in him: he was triste and distrait, and, in a much shorter time than he had intended, he returned to England.

Gerald's first question to the servant who opened the door to him was: "Is Captain Dayrell still here?"

"No, sir, he went back to town two days ago; and master and missis and the young ladies are gone to a juvenile-party, and won't be back till late."

"Miss Lloyd and Miss Deane, are they both at home?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Deane came back four days since. Miss Lloyd was to have gone with her ladyship to the party, but had a headache."

After eating a little dinner hurriedly, Gerald went in search of Eleanor. Unless her headache had compelled her to remain upstairs, he thought that he should probably find her in the back drawing-room. And there, in fact, he did find her. Her headache was better, and she had been playing a capriccio by Schubert. When Gerald opened the door she was still at the piano, sitting with downcast eyes and a finger pressed to her lips—thinking. The noise of the opening door broke her reverie. There was a start of surprise and a sudden blush when she saw who it was that came into the room. She rose from her chair, advanced a step or two, held out both her hands, and said: "I am so glad you are come back again!" As Gerald took her hands for a moment in his, he saw that there was a tear trembling in each corner of her eyes, blue as the skies on an April morning. He saw, too, or thought he saw, behind those tears, Love, that, suddenly surprised, had not had time to hide itself. All her being seemed to be suffused with an indescribable tenderness. The black thoughts that had coiled themselves round Gerald's heart from the hour of his leaving Stammars till the time of his return—his jealousy of Dayrell—his doubts as to whether Eleanor really cared for him—all vanished in this moment of supreme joy, like mists before the rising sun. It was impossible that

he should doubt any longer. An impulse that was uncontrollable, that swept away the flood-gates of thought and reason, came over him. He was still holding her hands and gazing into her eyes. He drew her to him—close to him. He wrapped his arms round her and pressed her to his bosom, her face upturned to his. He bent his head, and touched with his lips the blossom of hers. "Oh, my darling! if I could but tell you how much I love you!" he murmured in her ear. "If I could but tell you how happy it makes me to see you again!"

Her face was rosy red, but the moment he had kissed her, the violet of her eyes seemed to darken, and a strange, fathomless look came into them, such as he had never seen before. Then the tears fell, and for one brief, happy moment—while the second-hand of a clock might have marked six—she let her head rest where he had put it. Suddenly the great hall bell clanged loudly. The family had come back. Eleanor started, as the fawn starts from the covert when it hears the hunter's horn. For a single instant her eyes met Gerald's. An instant later he was in the room alone.

He stood for a little while like a man suddenly roused from sleep, who hardly knows where he is, or what has befallen him. "Was it my darling herself that rested in my arms, and whose lips I kissed just now?" he said. "Or have I suddenly lost my wits and only imagined it all? No! It must be true—it shall be true! At last she is mine—mine for ever!" Then, like one who feels himself to be still half asleep, he walked out of the room and shut the door behind him.

Hardly had the door closed, when Olive Deane stepped from her hiding-place behind the curtains of one of the windows, from which spot she had been an unseen witness of the foregoing scene. Her pupils were away, and she had nothing to do. She had gone into the back drawing-room at dusk, before the lamps were lighted, and had sat down on the cushioned seat that ran round the inner side of the large bow window. Presently, a servant came in to light the lamps, but went away again without perceiving Olive. Sitting there, behind the partially-drawn curtains, she was, as it were, in a tiny room of her own; and there she might probably have remained the whole evening without being discovered, had she chosen to do so. In fact, when Eleanor came in a little later, and sat down at the piano and began to play, Olive neither spoke nor stirred, but sat watching her rival with jealous, hungry eyes, and made no sign. Thus it fell out that she became an uninvited witness of the scene between Eleanor and Gerald.

There was a look of triumph on Olive's pale face as she stepped out of her hiding-place. In her black eyes there was an unwonted sparkle. "Checkmate at last!" she said. "Before long, I shall be able to tell Matthew that the hour of his vengeance has come. What will he say when he knows that the accepted lover of dainty Miss Lloyd is no gentleman, such as Captain Dayrell, but a beggarly adventurer, without

money enough to pay for the clothes he wears? Surely his revenge will be twice as sweet as it would otherwise have been! As for her—one short hour will strip her of name, wealth, position, and of the man to whom she has given her hand—for Pomeroy is not the man I take him to be if he do not cast her off the moment her real story is told him. Fine feathers make fine birds, Miss Eleanor Lloyd. We shall see how you will look when you are stripped of yours. Before three months are over, you will be grateful to anyone who will obtain for you a situation at forty pounds a year."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SECRET OF THE SEA.

MR. BYRNE had been in the habit of writing a line to Ambrose Murray every few days, in order to satisfy the latter as to how matters were progressing at the house in Spur Alley. In one of his brief notes he mentioned that Van Duren had left home on business for a couple of days. Gerald Warburton happened to be at Miss Bellamy's when this note came to hand, and Murray at once proposed that he and Gerald should visit Byrne and his daughter in Spur Alley, while Van Duren was out of town. Gerald assented, and at six o'clock that evening, they found themselves at Van Duren's door. Mrs. Bakewell, as she ushered them upstairs, informed them that Miss Byrne had gone out almost an hour previously, but that the old gentleman would no doubt be very glad to see them.

There was no answer to the woman's knock at Mr. Byrne's door. "Poor old gentleman, he gets weaker and deafer every day," she said. "He's not long for this world, I'm afraid." Then she opened the door, and went into the room. Mr. Byrne was sitting, as he seemed ever to sit, in his great easy-chair in front of the fire. Mrs. Bakewell touched him on the shoulder, and shouted in his ear: "Two gentlemen to see you, sir."

"Ech, ech! two gentlemen to see me? Tell 'em to come in: tell 'em to come in. And shut that door as soon as you can. That draught's enough to cut one in two," and with that he turned feebly round and confronted his visitors. And then his cough began to trouble him, and he could not find a word to say till Mrs. Bakewell had gone out and shut the door behind her.

A moment later he was on his feet and grasping his visitors warmly by the hand. "Welcome to Spur Alley, gentlemen!" he said. "You could not have come at a more opportune time, except in one respect—that my daughter is not here to receive you as well as I. But the kettle is on the hob, and I've a bottle of prime Kinahan in the cupboard, together with a few choice Henry Clays, that were sent me

by a friend the other day. If you please, we will make ourselves as comfortable as present circumstances will admit of."

After a little conversation of no particular moment, said Byrne: "I am glad that you have come to see me, Mr. Murray. Had you not come here, I should have made a point of calling upon you in the course of a few days."

"Have you something of importance to communicate?"

"No, it is not exactly that; but I think the time has come for me to tell you what I have done already, and what I hope to accomplish before I am many days older; together with my reasons for going about this matter in the way I have gone about it."

"I shall be very glad to hear anything you may have to say, Mr. Byrne; but if you would rather defer this revelation for a little while longer, pray do so. As I have told you already, I have every confidence in your management of the affair, and shall continue to have, whether you choose to-day to tell me anything or nothing."

"You are very kind, Mr. Murray, but I think that I shall feel more comfortable if I tell you everything. I want either your approval or your disapproval of what I am doing: I want to feel the ground firm under my feet."

"In that case I have nothing more to say. You know what an intense interest the matter has for me in all its bearings, great or small."

"Before beginning what I have to tell you," said Byrne, "it may be just as well to lock the door. It was only the other day that Pringle, Van Duren's clerk, opened the door suddenly and put his head into the room. I felt sure at the time that he had either seen or suspected something, and would tell his master. I suppose I was mistaken, but for all that I don't run the same risk again."

Having locked the door, Mr. Byrne proceeded to light a cigar, and then to brew himself a tumbler of grog with all the care and deliberation to which so important a proceeding was entitled at his hands. Gerald joined him over a cigar. Murray never smoked.

"When you first came to me, Mr. Warburton, and spoke to me about this business," began Byrne after a few preliminary puffs, "I was more surprised than I cared to let you see. And when you told me what it was that you wanted me to do, I was still more surprised. And well I might be, as you will hear presently. You came to me, Mr. Warburton, in the first place, because you thought there might be a faint possibility of my being able to assist you to discover the whereabouts of Max Jacoby. I was able to assist you in a way that you little dreamt of. My brother, who is two years older than I am, was originally a sergeant in the detective police. He retired some years ago, and he now keeps a little country tavern in the neighbourhood of Dorking. I told my brother what I wanted; he gave me a note to a particular

friend of his who is still in the force, and it was through the kindness of this latter gentleman that I was enabled to inform you that our friend Mr. Max lived here, under this very roof, in Spur Alley. Having obtained that information for you, I naturally concluded that my task was at an end; but when you told me what further you wanted from me, that opened up an entirely fresh phase of the question."

Here Mr. Byrne paused to stir his grog and refresh himself with a hearty drink.

"The point urged by both of you," resumed Byrne, "was your belief that Max Jacoby was the murderer of Paul Stilling; and the question you put before me was: By what means is it possible to bring the guilt home to him? Gentlemen, what method of procedure I might have adopted under different circumstances in order to find an answer to your question I cannot of course say, but the one which I did adopt had its origin in a very peculiar occurrence, which I will presently explain to you. My plan was this: to take lodgings in this house—I and my daughter. To make the acquaintance of Van Duren. To invite him to tea or supper, in order that he might have an opportunity of associating with Miriam, who, on her part, was to do her best to fascinate him—to make him fall in love with her, and, if possible, to propose to her. Of this scheme Miriam was the hinge. Everything depended upon her—upon her good looks and powers of fascination. But knowing the sort of man I had to deal with, I determined to smooth for him still further the road I wanted him to travel. With this end in view, I led Van Duren on to the belief that I was rich, and I caused to be drawn up in due form a fictitious will, by which I bequeathed fifteen thousand pounds to my daughter, and of which I made Van Duren himself one of the executors. The bait took as I expected it would take. Van Duren, smitten already by my daughter's good looks, was conquered entirely when he found that she was also an heiress. A few evenings ago he fell on his knees before her and implored her to marry him. Miriam, by my instructions, accepted him conditionally: he is to be a month on probation, and if at the end of that time she finds that she can like him sufficiently well, she is to accept him as her future husband. But before the month of probation shall have come to an end, the particular object which has necessitated all this scheming and preparation will, I trust, have been accomplished."

Mr. Byrne had allowed his cigar to go out while talking. He now proceeded to relight it. This done, he again paid his respects to the grog.

Both Ambrose Murray and Gerald were utterly puzzled. That Byrne should have allowed, and, by his own confession, encouraged, Van Duren to make love and propose to his daughter, was to them an altogether incomprehensible proceeding. They awaited his further revelations with impatience.

You have certainly succeeded in exciting our curiosity, Mr. Byrne," said Gerald, "and I hope you won't send us away till you have thoroughly satisfied it."

"Never fear, sir. You shall have the whole history before you leave the room. With your permission we will retrace our steps a little. I have already told you that I have a brother who was formerly a sergeant in the detective force. He held this position at the same time that I was confidential clerk to Mr. Frodsham. As you are both aware, I happened to be in court on the very day that you, Mr. Murray, were tried for the murder of Paul Stilling. One of the chief witnesses at the trial was our friend, Mr. Max Jacoby. After my return to London I called one evening to smoke a pipe with my brother, and in the course of conversation the Tewkesbury murder case cropped up. I told Dick, who likes to hear of such matters, all about the trial. Jacoby's name was mentioned, and I remember remarking to my brother that he had far more the look of a murderer than the man in the dock—meaning you, sir. Well, gentlemen, some three or four months passed away, when, one day, I met my brother casually in the street. Says he to me: 'Peter, when next you come up to my crib I can show you a bit of paper that may perhaps interest you a little—a bit of paper with some writing on it, I mean.'—'Is the writing by anybody that I know?' said I. —'It's a letter,' said he, 'and the signature to it is "Max Jacoby"—the name of the fellow, isn't it, who was a witness in the Tewkesbury murder case?'—'That's the name, sure enough,' replied I. 'But how did a letter signed by him come into your possession?'—'Oh, the fellow to whom it was addressed got into a little difficulty. I had to search his rooms, and I found this letter among a lot of other papers. I took a copy of it before handing over the original, as I thought it might interest you.' Well, gentlemen, I thought very little more of the matter, as, indeed, why should I? Dick, however, did not forget, and the next time I called on him he produced the letter. I read the letter, and looked upon the affair as one of those curious coincidences which so frequently happen in real life; but I speedily forgot all about it, and the chances are that I should never have thought about it again had not your visit to me brought all the old circumstances back to my mind. After that visit I made it my first business to go down to Dorking and see my brother. The question was, had he, after all these years, got the copy of Jacoby's letter still by him? Fortunately for us, Dick is one of those cautious souls who hardly ever destroy anything, and who have an almost superstitious reverence for any scrap of paper with writing on it. In short, gentlemen, the letter was there. Dick gave it up to me without difficulty, and it is in my writing-desk at the present moment. Before reading the letter to you, I may just add that, having regard to my brother's great experience, I have taken the liberty of consulting him at each step of this affair. It is some pleasure

to me to be able to say that he takes the same view of the contents of the letter that I take, and that he agrees with all I have done up to the present time."

"You were quite right in consulting your brother, Mr. Byrne," said Murray. "It only proves still more clearly how thoroughly you have identified yourself with the case."

Byrne crossed the room, unlocked his writing-desk, and came back with the letter in his hand. "The letter bears no date," said he, "but as it was found by my brother in the lodgings of the man to whom it was addressed only some three or four months after the murder—subsequent to which occurrence it was, in my opinion, written—the exact date is a matter of very minor consequence. The address given is simply, 'My old lodgings,' and as it was found without an envelope, there is no clue to the post-mark. But that, too, is a matter of little consequence. And now you shall hear what it says." Mr. Byrne threw the end of his cigar into the fire, cleared his throat, and opening the yellow, time-worn paper, read as under:—

"MY DEAR LEGROS,—You will be surprised to hear from me so quickly after our last farewell, and to see the place from which this letter is written. Yes, I am back once more in the old spot—penniless—a beggar! I have met with a most terrible misfortune. I have been shipwrecked, and everything I had in the world has gone to the bottom. When I say *everything*, you know what I mean. I mean that which cost me so dear—that which I ran so terrible a risk for—that for which one man's life, and another man's happiness, were sacrificed. But the curse of blood rested on it, and it has gone. You remember that when you parted from me on board ship I had every prospect of a fair voyage, but during the night the wind began to rise, and by daylight next morning a terrific gale was blowing. We were still in sight of land, and having sprung a leak, we put back towards a little harbour with which our captain was acquainted. But before we could reach it, the ship struck on a sunken rock, and then it was every man for himself. We saved our bare lives, and that was all. I tried all I could to bribe the men to take my box with them in the boat, but it was of no avail. 'Life's sweeter than all the gold in the world,' they said. 'Your box may go to the devil, and we'll send you after it if we have any of your nonsense.' There was no use in my going abroad when I had lost the only inducement which would have taken me there. So here I am once more, the world all before me. I have just enough money left to buy me to-morrow's dinner. After that — ? But I need not say more. I trust to you, my dear Legros, to send me a five-pound note by return. In fact, I must have it. I know too much of you, and you know too much of me, for either of us to decline these sweet little offices of friendship for the other.—Thine,

"MAX JACOBY."

The three men looked at each other in silence as Byrne slowly refolded the letter.

"Your familiarity with the contents of this letter," said Gerald at last, "has enabled you to arrive at certain conclusions in your own mind such as we, to whom the letter comes as an utter surprise, can no more than barely guess at. Do you mind telling us what these conclusions are?"

"The conclusions I have come to are very few and very simple," said Byrne; "simple, inasmuch as, to my mind, knowing what I know, they are plainly discoverable through the thin veil of obscurity in which the contents of the letter are purposely involved. My conclusions are these: That this letter was written within a very short time after the murder and subsequent trial. That the property whose loss Jacoby bewails in such bitter terms was neither more nor less than the proceeds of the murder, with which he was going abroad. That when the ship went to the bottom, Jacoby's ill-gotten gains went with her, and that Jacoby himself, having no longer the means of going abroad, came back to London in a state of utter destitution, as is evidenced by his begging the loan of a five-pound note from his quondam friend."

"Yes," said Gerald, after a few minutes of silent thought, "I quite agree with you that the construction which you have put upon the contents of this letter is a most feasible one, and I am inclined to think that it is also the true one. But even granting that such be the case, I confess I am still at a loss to understand in what way a proposal of marriage from Jacoby to your daughter can forward by one single step the special end we have in view—to bring home the crime to the real murderer."

"That, too, is where I am puzzled," said Murray; "for singular as this letter is, and confirmatory as it is of the belief I have all along maintained, that Jacoby is the guilty man, I altogether fail to see in what way Mr. Byrne's late proceedings tend to fix the guilt upon him."

Byrne, looking from one to the other, rubbed his hands and chuckled. "I thought that part of the business would be a stumbling-block," he said. "But if you will allow me, I can lift you over it very easily. You will have observed that Jacoby's letter enters into no particulars. It gives neither the name of the ship, the date of sailing, nor the port he sailed from. We cannot advance a step beyond the letter till we make ourselves masters of that information. It is quite evident that there is only one source from which we can obtain it, and that is from Jacoby himself. How are we to get out of him any information respecting this, the great secret of his life? Were you or I to question him, we should merely arouse his suspicions and shut his lips for ever. Gentlemen, no one can worm the secret out of this man but a woman—and only a woman that he loves. Gentlemen, Max Jacoby loves my daughter, and has asked her to become his wife: on my

daughter devolves the duty of making this man reveal what he has probably never told yet to any living soul. And now you understand the point at which we have arrived."

"Clearly," said Gerald; "and upon my word, I am doubtful whether the same result could have been arrived at by means other than those which you have seen fit to make use of."

Ambrose Murray did not speak, but he put out his arm, and grasped Byrne by the hand in a fashion far more eloquent than words.

"If Mr. Byrne will allow me, I will proceed just one step further in the matter," said Gerald. "Assuming for a moment that we have succeeded in getting out of Jacoby all the information we want from him; that we know when and from where he sailed, and the name of the ship—what then? The only evidence on which it would be possible to convict him will still be at the bottom of the sea."

Before Byrne could say a word in reply there came a sudden knocking at the door, and the voice of Bakewell was heard outside. "A letter for Mr. Byrne."

Murray, his mind impressed with what had gone before, said solemnly: "Yes it will still be, what it must remain for ever—a 'Secret of the Sea!'"

Byrne held up a warning finger. In one minute he seemed to become twenty years older. He hobbled feebly towards the door, coughing meanwhile in a way that was pitiful to hear. "All right, Bakewell, I'm coming—I'm coming," he cried, querulously. Then, as he opened the door, Miriam's voice was heard carolling gaily as she ran quickly upstairs.

(To be continued.)



PHYLLIS AND CORYDON.

BY JULIA KAVANAGH.

THE world was very full of handsome shepherds and lovely shepherdesses a hundred years ago. You found them in books, in pictures, in china—everywhere, indeed, except in fair pasture lands or on the slopes of grassy hills. Of the coarse beings who wore the skins of Alpine goats and the plaids of Scottish Highlanders; who tended sheep through snow or hailstorm; who thought more of a well-filled flask than of pastoral curds; the world took no account. They were made for toil and pains and wrinkles and old age; whereas Corydon and Phyllis, ever blooming, ever young, fulfilled their lot if they charmed tender hearts and captivated wayward fancies.

Thus they had it all their own way in the world at large, but in France most especially; in no place more so than in the old castle of Saint Brice. What had brought this Arcadian pair to a rude stone keep, once the home of mailed men and mediæval ladies, and which still frowned above the Atlantic grim and defiant, though the days of chivalry had so long gone by? What had these psuedo children of smiling Greece to do in a land of barren heath, and in a home reared amongst rocks, at the foot of which the mighty waves came beating up all foam and fury, and whence they rolled back to their vast bed with a sullen, conquered roar? Vain questions. Madame de Saint Brice, a young widow smitten with the pastoral mania of her age, had willed it so, and brought them all the way from Paris in a volume indited by the Chevalier de Florian himself. Thus do we find her on a lovely summer morning dressing in her room for the rehearsal of a play in which she was to act Estelle to the Marquis de la Faille's Némorin. He was a widower, an admirer; and the Countess, who longed to be turned into a Marchioness, took unusual pains in adorning her pretty person. She wore a blue taffetas petticoat, short and full, a low pink-laced bodice, clocked stockings, and high-heeled shoes; and on the top of her powdered head was perched a little straw hat wreathed with roses. "Madame la Comtesse looks lovely," said her handmaid Justine.

The Countess thought so too, but was going to utter a modest "Nonsense," when with a scream she exclaimed: "My crook! where is my crook?"

Justine, scarcely less alarmed than her mistress, looked for the crook, a gilt one adorned with blue ribbons, but it had vanished from the corner where it should have been standing. Mistress and maid exchanged looks of dismay; the young Count must have purloined his mother's crook. Downstairs flew the Countess in an agony of fear

wings would not have been more nimble than were her little feet as her high heels clacked down the stone steps worn by generations of feudal ladies. Panting and breathless, she rushed into a low, gaunt room—all the rooms were gaunt at Saint Brice—and there found the young Count in his undress jacket and shirt-sleeves, and in the very act of poisoning the crook, previous to hurling it, javelin-wise, through the window at an imaginary besieger in the moat below. The Countess snatched the crook from his hand.

"You naughty boy!" she cried; "how dare you!—and why are you not dressed?"

The Count of Saint Brice was a handsome lad, with a brown face and rich black flowing hair; but he was also a haughty young Celt, stubborn and proud, and his lip curled as he answered,

"I will not dress for Corydon. He is a peasant."

"Then how can Madame be Estelle if there is no Corydon to call Némorin when her lamb is drowning?" asked Justine, who was settling the rumbled blue ribbons around the crook.

"Let the lamb be drowned," was the young Count's cruel reply.

"But, my darling," urged the Countess, "you are to be Corydon to the Marquis's little girl Phyllis —"

"I hate little girls," he interrupted.

Justine uttered a scream. "Oh! If Monsieur le Comte had only seen this Phyllis"—whose real name was Madeleine—"this angel with golden hair and blue eyes, by whose side he, the Count, would look so handsome in his pea-green coat!"

But flattery and entreaties proved vain. Count Philip de Saint Brice stood before the two women, handsome, bold, and defiant, with a stubborn "I will not be Corydon," in answer to all they could urge.

"The pastoral is done for," said the Countess, bursting into tears; "and—and the Marquis will never forgive me."

The Count was a spoiled, disobedient son, but he was a loving one. He could not resist his mother's grief. He threw his arms around her neck, promised to be Corydon, and offered to dress at once.

"And you will not be rude to Phyllis?" said the Countess, taking advantage of his relenting mood.

"No, no," he magnanimously replied; "I shall not."

The Marquis de la Faille lived in a pleasant inland château, with gardens around it that were the Versailles of the province. As they alighted from their stately old carriage, the Countess, pointing to a vista of white statues, shining fountains, and clipped trees, said softly: "Philip, this is beautiful."

"I like the old moat of Saint Brice ten times better," stoutly answered Philip.

"Hush! here is the Marquis. Ah! how well he looks dressed as Némorin!"

It is not usual to dress for rehearsals, but neither the Countess nor her bosom friend, Madame de Mersan, who was to be Eglé, nor the Marquis, nor any of the other people who were to act in the pastoral, would have cared a rush for it, without the dressing. So Némorin, when he appeared at the head of the perron to greet his guests, was in the full bloom of a peach-coloured coat of true shepherd cut, and of a dainty straw hat and ribbons all fresh from Arcadia. He was a fine man, with pale blue eyes and a weak nether-lip, but a very handsome, courtly gentleman withal, though scarcely youthful enough for the part he had chosen. The young Count eyed him with the cool contempt of his coming manhood for a disguise so effeminate, and crossed a noble hall and splendid salons with the same silent scorn of all he saw, till his mother said gaily: "Now, Corydon, here is Phyllis."

Corydon's haughty young eyes fell on a little girl who might be some seven years old or so. She wore a rich white silk petticoat, and a little red velvet bodice laced with blue. A cloud of golden curls fell around her face and slender neck. Her blue eyes were bright as stars, her skin was the whitest Corydon had ever seen; a little black mole, not far from her dimpled chin, made it seem still whiter. When he gazed on this fairy-like being, the young Count felt bewildered and bewitched, not so much with her beauty, though she was very pretty, but because he had never before seen so dainty a little creature. He stared at her in silent admiration, and had eyes for nothing else.

The stage had been erected in a green-house; a few tall shrubs did very well for a bower in the foreground; a real lamb, alive, of course, was to be nearly drowned in a real river which flowed through banks of real grass, and on one of these banks Phyllis was told to sit whilst Corydon, nothing loth, stretched himself at her feet and handed her buttercups and daisies, which her nimble little hands wreathed into garlands. All the characters sustained their parts admirably, with one exception: the lamb bleated at the wrong times, and, unlike the man in the story, would not be drowned in the last act, but had to be pulled by his rose-coloured leash and pushed into a river three inches deep.

But all this was nothing to Corydon and Phyllis, with whom alone we have any concern. This being a rehearsal, they were allowed to talk, and Corydon was prompt to use the privilege.

"What little feet you have got!" he said, looking curiously at the two red leather shoes on the grass by him. "Can you really walk with them?"

"No," replied Phyllis, with a toss of her golden curls; "I do not walk—I run."

There was a pause. Then the boy's lean finger suddenly alighted on the black mole near Phyllis's chin. "How pretty!" he said, admiringly; "is it real?"

"Do not be rude," said Phyllis, tartly, "and give me the buttercups."

There is no knowing how much more Corydon might have said, and Phyllis answered, in this strain, but for a person whom history has called The Severe Aunt. This lady held the whole pastoral in jealous contempt, and though intent on watching Estelle and Némorin, she found some spare vigilance to bestow on the two children. Buttercups and daisies, little feet, and real moles, indeed! At their time of life, too! So first raising her shaggy eyebrows in amazement, then knitting them in wrath, this lady dragon silenced the young pair with a loud "Hush!" Corydon, who cared naught for dragons, looked defiant; but little Phyllis was frightened, and when the first act was over, and the severe aunt's eye averted, she took Corydon's hand and stole away with him unperceived.

That first act was a great success, and Eglé, Madame de Saint Brice's devoted friend, was in rapture with Estelle's acting and good looks. As for Némorin, she declared anyone could see he was smitten. And these dear children! Nature had surely intended them for each other! Almost in the same strain did this amiable Eglé address the severe aunt. That lady was in her darkest mood: was not her brother-in-law making a fool of himself—and at his time of life too—before her very eyes? So when Eglé's soft, flattering voice began commenting, in her ear, on his good looks, fine acting, and so forth, the severe aunt, turning on the speaker, said sharply: "The man that marries more than once is a fool."

Eglé shook her head and really feared he was.

"And the woman who marries more than once," began the severe aunt—

"Oh! she is a monster," blandly interrupted Eglé, who was a very handsome widow.

"I say she ought to be whipped!" exclaimed the severe aunt.

Slave-owners, it was said, used to like to whip their slaves now and then; so even a figurative whipping may have its enjoyments for some minds. The severe aunt certainly looked at Madame de Saint Brice's plump, white shoulders as if the imaginary rod she was laying across them were pleasant to wield, and, thanks to the satisfaction this harmless rod gave her, Phyllis and Corydon were forgotten.

Happy children! They strayed to the garden between the acts. They ate cherries and cakes. They played, they ran, they sang; their friendship ripening faster than fruit was ever ripened by tropical sun—ripened so fast, indeed, that when the moment for parting came, Phyllis clung to Corydon, and, spite the frowns of the severe aunt, wept and begged that he would not go.

"My dear heart," said Corydon, "I must go, but—" a kiss on the black mole came in here and struck the severe aunt speechless—"I shall soon come again; do not cry."

Here the Marquis interfered, and by promising this tearful Phyllis to take her to see Corydon the next day, he induced her to let the youth

free. Happy Madame de Saint Brice drove away beaming. Philip would marry little Phyllis, of course, and she would marry Phyllis's father, and the golden age had all come back.

The Marquis de la Faille was true to his word. He called on the Countess the very next day, with his sister-in-law and his little daughter. Phyllis at once stole away with Corydon, who put her on his back, and carried her up a steep stone staircase, dark and narrow, to an upper chamber, whence there was a grand view of the rock-bound coast and the foaming Atlantic.

"Would you like to live here?" asked Corydon.

Phyllis shook her head, and uttered a very candid "No."

"What, not live here with me!" exclaimed Corydon, frowning.

"Me" is an irresistible argument with some tender feminine hearts, even at that early age of seven, for Phyllis, suddenly altering her mind, declared, with delightful inconsistency, that she should like it of all things—with Corydon.

"And when you are tall enough," kindly said Corydon, surveying her little figure, "I shall marry you."

"And when we are married, you will carry me on your back as much as I like?" suggested Phyllis, insinuatingly.

Corydon surveyed her little figure again. "I daresay you will never be very heavy," he observed, meditatively; "besides, I cannot marry you just yet, you know. I must fight the king's enemies first. Perhaps I may get both my legs shot under me, like the Count of Boufflers who was killed at Fontenoy, when he was ten years old. He was charging at the head of his own regiment."

Phyllis knew nothing of the kind, but on hearing this piteous story, surely one of the most piteous of those days, she burst into tears, and sobbingly entreated Corydon not to be shot, and not to die. Corydon was already too much of a man not to like to make Phyllis miserable about him, so he only replied, "that he should see," until moved by her grief, he relented, bade her not cry, and comforted her with a kiss, and a lump of sugar-candy which he drew forth from his pocket.

Whilst this young shepherdess and her swain went on with precocious but harmless love-making upstairs, a storm, of which they were the innocent cause, was raging below. In her anxiety to keep watch on her brother-in-law, the severe aunt had neglected to see what became of her niece, but suddenly missing her, she exclaimed:

"My niece! Where is my niece?"

For this lady was one of those persons to whom the possessive pronoun is dear. Némorin had just been whispering some soft nonsense in Estelle's little foolish pink ear; her silly heart was elated, and she replied with much sprightliness, "And where should Phyllis be, save with Corydon?"

"Madame," said the severe aunt, who hated a joke, "I say, where is my niece?"

"And I say, where should Phyllis be, save with Corydon?" retorted the Countess, who was bent on being witty.

The Marquis saw that a battle was imminent. He was an arrant coward, and went to a window, whence he gazed down with profound interest on the dull green moat below. But this neutrality availed him not. The severe aunt carried on the war with such spirit and vigour that in five minutes time she had prostrated her poor little enemy with this home-thrust, which also reached the Marquis in the window:

"Madame, you may Némorin and make a fool of my brother-in-law, but your son shall not Phyllis and make a fool of my niece."

Madame de Saint Brice burst into tears, the Marquis looked foolish, and the door of the salon flew open. Little Phyllis, red as a rose, her bright locks streaming behind her, rushed in, full of glee, "Do not tell him," she cried; "do not tell him I am here," and she crouched behind a huge arm-chair.

In a moment the severe aunt, swift as a falcon, pounced upon this silly little dove and bore her away in her talons, not without enduring some protests in the way of kicking from Phyllis's little red-shoed feet. With a hasty excuse, the Marquis followed, to see, no doubt, that his little daughter did not inflict any injury on his respected relative; and when Corydon entered the room in full cry, with a "I know you are here: I see you," he saw not Phyllis, who had vanished, but his mother in hysterics, and her friend Eglé administering salts and consolations in equal and alternate doses.

"My dear creature," she said, "I will make all right!"

"How can you?" sobbed poor Estelle.

"My dear creature, it is the easiest thing in the world."

And the easiest thing in the world it was, after a fashion, to Madame de Mersan, for to comfort her friend, to soothe the severe aunt, and to save the Marquis from all further troubles of that kind, she married him before a month was over.

Little Madame de Saint Brice died five years after this, declaring that the treachery of her friend had broken her heart. As to the severe aunt, she goes out of the story of Phyllis and Corydon after the wedding-day, but there is no reason to believe that it extinguished her altogether. Indeed, it was an event which brought happiness to none.

Six months after his marriage the Marquis fled to his regiment, in the bosom of which he prudently remained. His wife went to Versailles, where she led a gay life, till having quarrelled with a Princess of the blood, she was ordered back to Brittany, there to remain during His Majesty's pleasure. The lady had a high spirit. She would not vent her displeasure upon her husband, the Princess, or the King, but she would break in Phyllis. It may be that the child was not easily broken in;

perhaps, too, there were too many inconvenient witnesses in the château; for her stepmother soon found that the best means of accomplishing her object was to send Phyllis to her own widowed sister, a Madame du Mésnil, who lived in the neighbouring seaport town. So judgment was held, sentence was passed, and Phyllis was banished from her father's house.

Madame du Mésnil lived close to the harbour, in a gaunt old mansion with tall windows and a nail-studded, oaken door. The aged servant-woman who brought Phyllis to this house, on a summer evening, raised the heavy knocker and let it fall again with a dull sound. A childish face, which looked very bright and rosy in the light of the setting sun, appeared at once behind the cross grating of a window on the ground-floor, and, in a clear, treble voice, this young janitress asked to know what the strangers wanted. When the woman declared their business, the little keeper of the place said, sententiously: "The little girl may come in, but you must not."

The servant tossed her head. She did not want to come in—not she: nor, to do her justice, did she make the attempt; and when the great wooden den was unbarred and unlocked from within, she just thrust in poor Phyllis, and walked away.

The little girl of the house was very pretty; she was also younger and shorter than Phyllis, though she was oddly dressed in a faded blue-silk sacque much too long for her, and wore a huge lace cap—quite big enough for a woman—on the top of her little fair-haired head.

"Come this way," she said, after surveying Phyllis from top to toe; and she clattered up a dark, old staircase, making a great noise with her shoe-heels, which were prodigiously high.

"What is your name?" she said to Phyllis, as they entered together a very dingy, old salon; then, without waiting for an answer, "My name is Manon. How old are you? I am thirteen. Stand by me and let us see in the glass which is the taller of the two," continued this little lady, leading her companion to a dull, old mirror, and rising on tip-toe to survey her own image. It was a very lovely image, though so oddly attired, and the bright young face beneath the cap bore some resemblance to Phyllis's sad, childish countenance—such resemblance as one may find between the radiant sun and his pale sister the moon.

"I am the taller of the two," said Manon. "The heels of my shoes have nothing to do with it," she sharply added, detecting the look Phyllis cast at her feet. Then, in the same breath, she informed her visitor that she would have to give up her fine clothes: "for you will have to sweep the floors and wash the dishes, you know," she added, raising her young eyebrows. "But I shall let you sleep in my bed. Come and look at my room."

Obedient Phyllis went. Manon's room was like the salon, like the

whole house—dingy and faded ; the hangings were moth-eaten, the blue lampas bed-curtains had lost almost every vestige of colour, the furniture was so old that it seemed ready to crumble to pieces. Everything looked so dull and so dreary in the dim twilight that Phyllis began to feel afraid. Was she alone with Manon in that great house?

"What about it?" answered Manon; "her mother and her two big sisters, Jeanne and Marie, were only gone to the play with the Viscount and the Marquis. They were Gardes du Pavillon, you know, and she, Manon, would go to the play, too, a year hence."

Then began a glowing account of all the delights which the town afforded, in the way of plays, balls, and masquerades; and the Gardes du Pavillon figured so often in these narratives that Phyllis, wondering, asked who these gentlemen were.

"They are naval officers, you know," said Manon; "they are all nobles, all young, all handsome, and oh! they are so wicked!" she added, raising her eyebrows again.

"How so?" asked Phyllis beneath her breath.

"Why, they spread nets at night in the streets to catch the girls, you know," said Manon, "and they take them to the King's ships and sail away with them; and when they owe a good deal of money, they catch their creditors and carry them off to India and never pay them!" added Manon, triumphantly. "Then, when they have a fancy to it, they turn every one out of the theatre and keep the house to themselves. Oh, they are so wicked! But we need not be afraid; we are nobles, and they only catch tradesmen's daughters, you know."

Phyllis drew little comfort from this assurance, and timorously asked to go to bed. Perhaps she thought the terrible Gardes du Pavillon could not find her under the bed-clothes if they should take a fancy to invade the house. Manon let her creep into the big old bed, but kept her awake by talking of balls, Gardes du Pavillon, and a pink satin robe belonging to her elder sister which that young lady had promised to give her at some future period of time. 'Spite Manon's chatter and her own fears, Phyllis at length fell asleep, but towards dawn a great noise in the street below woke her. She heard a clash of swords, a woman's shriek, then all was still. Hiding her head under the quilt, she shook with fear, whilst Manon slept and dreamed of pink satin.

Even if Manon's stories had been false, Phyllis would have believed every word of them; but it so happened that they were true—tragic stories that still live in the records of those evil days, and which received the most tragic of all endings in the scaffold of ninety-three. Men were turned out with contumely from the theatre of Brest because the blood in their veins was not blue; the accounts of noble debtors were settled by luring plebeian creditors on board the King's ships and carrying them off to sea, and nets were spread in the streets of the city for girls and women who were not of the patrician race.

To that favoured race, though much fallen in substance, and still more in honour, Madame du Mésnil belonged. She had beautiful daughters, and made the most of them. These young ladies were much admired by Messieurs les Gardes du Pavillon, and admiration sometimes took the shape of wine, sometimes it appeared as so many yards of velvet and satin. Nay, a turkey and a quarter of lamb often expressed the power of Jeanne's bright eyes and of Marie's smiles. Money was probably a rare offering, for Madame's last servant had left because her wages had not been paid for two years, and it was to supply her place and get her spirit properly broken that Phyllis had been placed under this good lady's care.

A hard life Phyllis had of it now. Manon was kind to her in a capricious sort of way, and kept her awake at nights talking of her future triumphs ; but every one else was harsh and scornful to Phyllis. She was clothed in coarse grey camlet, to begin with, and made to do all the dirty work of the house. Nay, to her great terror, she had to go out on errands in the city and out of it, to get dainties for Madame du Mésnil and her daughters, who were fond of good things. Thus, one bleak morning in autumn Phyllis was bid to go and get these ladies some fresh watercresses from a little spring which flowed through a farm outside the town. "And if you cannot get any, why, you need not come back," said Madame du Mésnil from the door-step.

Thus dismissed, Phyllis went forth. With a sad heart, she walked along a bleak, bare road, feeling every blast of the cold northern wind through her thin camlet gown : but she was warm enough by the time she reached the farm-house. It was shut up—all the people were gone to a neighbouring fair ; only an angry dog, who growled at her from behind the door, had been left within. Phyllis wandered about disconsolately till she came to a little wood already turning sere and red beneath the grey wintry sky. Footsore and weary, the child took the first path she found ; scarcely had she walked a few steps when she saw an old brown rock covered with green mosses and patches of hoary lichens, and beneath it there bubbled forth a clear spring, which widened into a broad pool covered with a very forest of watercresses. This, then, was the goal of her journey. Phyllis was very tired, and the first thing she did was to sit down by the rock and rest. The spot was green and lonely, yet the child was not afraid. Maybe she felt all unconsciously that unkind voice and unkind eyes could not reach her here, and so she let the sweetness and tender calm of nature fall on her little troubled heart. Never, it seemed to Phyllis, had she seen anything so pretty and so green as this spot. Summer still lingered here, if not in its warmth, at least in its lovely verdure. A tuft of hart's tongue grew under the rock, and the long green glossy leaves drooped above the water. Delicate grasses and tall reeds waved in every little breath of wind, and pale blue flowers blossomed on the sandy bank,

against which the rippling water broke at the poor, tired feet of little Phyllis.

At length she was rested, and set about her task. It was harder of accomplishment than Phyllis had imagined it to be. The watercresses grew in the middle of the pool, and every time she tried to reach them she slipped down the edge of the bank into the water. She was soon wet up to the knees, and still the watercresses remained far away, inaccessible, and grew like a fairy isle. Phyllis tried them from every side of the pool; she bent over the rock to reach at them, and nearly tumbled into the water, and still those provoking cresses kept in their stronghold, and thence seemed to bid defiance to all her efforts. The water was so shallow, and Phyllis was so wet, that she might as well have waded through to get her booty; but that little dark pool on whose heart the gloomy shadow of the trees was lying seemed unfathomably deep to the timid child, so she stood on the edge, hopeless of accomplishing the task that had been laid upon her; and, fearful of returning home without having accomplished it, she wrung her hands in her helplessness and distress, and at length, fairly giving way, she sat down and burst into tears. Many and bitter were the thoughts that came to Phyllis as she wept. She knew that her father was noble and rich; why then was she the drudge and the servant of these strange women? This very spot might belong to the Marquis, for all his little daughter could say to the contrary, for he owned many a broad acre of the land that lay around his château. Was it not then a hard fate, that she, his child, should be sitting thus on the bare earth, her wet clothes clinging to her shivering limbs, and her heart sinking within her at the thought of going back empty-handed to the stern task-mistress who had been set over her? Yes, it was a hard lot, and the more Phyllis thought over it, the more she wept and gave way to her sorrow. And now it happened to her as it so often happens in the fairy tales: when the clouds are heaviest some bright sunbeam comes and pierces them. Little Phyllis was sitting thus, feeling all forlorn and quite heart-broken, when help came to her. Tramp, tramp, sounded a horse's hoofs along the road—for the pool was on the skirt of the wood—and as the tramp grew nearer there came with it a rushing sound through the thicket, and a dog ran down to the water's edge and began drinking eagerly by her side. Phyllis ceased her weeping to look at him. He was the most beautiful dog she had ever seen—silky, brown with white paws, a white star on his forehead, and a brass collar, bright as gold, round his neck. When the dog had done drinking he went sniffing round Phyllis, who remained quiet, for she was afraid; then he sat down by her and looked at her with his big brown eyes, so clear and so honest, whilst his red tongue lolled out of his mouth. It seemed to Phyllis as if he were trying to understand her trouble, and were asking her, in his canine way, to tell him all about it. She shook

her head at him with a sigh, and stretching out her little hand, stroked his brown coat, softly saying, like a child as she was: "It is no use telling you, for you know you could not help me."

As she thus addressed him, she bent to see what name was inscribed on the dog's collar, and with a start and a flush of surprise, she read:

FIDÈLE.

Belongs to the Count of Saint Brice.

This dog's master was the young Count whom, for his mother's sake, her stepmother so hated; that Corydon whom she had not seen for seven years, but whom she remembered so well. Meanwhile, the tramp, tramp, of the horse's hoofs was now close by. A shrill whistle called the truant away, and as he did not obey the summons, a clear young voice cried out, "Fidèle."

But Fidèle only whined and barked, perplexed. For some reason or other he would not leave Phyllis. His master, who knew that all this land belonged to the Marquis de la Faille, and who feared lest the dog should run down the game of a gentleman between whom and himself there was little love, alighted hastily and went to seek him.

Burning with shame at her humbled and fallen state, Phyllis crept round the rock and hid herself as the young man came up calling the dog. But he saw her, and said kindly, "Do not hide, child: I will not hurt you!" Phyllis, however, did not stir, so the Count, who had some natural curiosity in him, walked round the rock and found her standing there, with her back towards him and her face hidden in her hands.

"I tell you, child, I will not hurt you," he said again, and gently compelling her to turn round, he removed her hands from her crimson face.

Bitter was Phyllis's shame at appearing thus, in her coarse grey camel gown, so wet and unseemly, before the young Corydon who had once seen her in all the splendour of a white silk petticoat and red velvet bodice. She felt as if she must have sunk down to the very earth and been swallowed up by it, when, looking up at him, now grown to man's estate, she saw him so handsome, so gay, in a hunting-suit of grey laid with gold. She only hoped he would not know her again. Vain hope! The young Count's olive cheek grew flushed, his bright dark eyes lit. "Phyllis," he cried, "why, you are my Phyllis."

But on that first cry of surprise and joy followed the saddest wonder. "Phyllis, what brings you here alone? And you are all wet and shivering! Why, my little Phyllis, what has happened?"

She gazed up in his face. She read the tender kindness there, kindness all for her, so long unused to the sweet food; and being but a child, she threw her arms around him and cried piteously. When Phyllis was calmer, she found herself sitting again on the grassy earth; the young Count was sitting by her side, chafing her cold hands in his, and Fidèle—to keep her warm, no doubt—had coiled himself at her feet. Phyllis

related her sad little story to her old friend. He made no comments, but heard her with mingled wrath and sorrow. Fame had already told him strange tales of Madame du Mésnil's two beautiful daughters; Phyllis was still very young—a mere child; but these ladies should not be her companions. He resolved that they should not tempt her to folly and sin if he could prevent it. Of all this, however, he said not a word. His silence awed Phyllis, and feeling somewhat shy, she made a timid attempt to rise.

"I must try again and get the watercresses," she said, with a sigh. "I dare not go home without them."

"I shall get you plenty," he said, kindly; "do not think of that, or of these women, Phyllis. Be guided by me, and all will go well with you. Tell no one that we have met—not a soul."

"Oh! no, no," answered Phyllis, shaking her little wise head, as much as to say that she knew better.

"I do not know when we shall meet again," he resumed.

"I can come for more watercresses to-morrow," suggested Phyllis, in her innocence.

"I shall be far away by to-morrow," said the young Count, smiling, "and who knows, Phyllis, if you and I shall ever meet again?"

She heard him with a blank face. He had come down from heaven itself to comfort her, it seemed, and now he was going away, going perhaps for ever!

"But I will not leave France," continued the Count, "without seeing you righted, Phyllis. I will go to the King himself in Versailles, and tell him how you, his poor little subject, are treated. Those cruel women shall not hold you in bondage a week longer, Phyllis, not one."

But Phyllis did not heed these promises of future good. She looked up in his face till her eyes were blinded with tears.

"And shall I not see you again?" she asked, clinging to him; "never, never again?"

The young Count hesitated. He was bound on a daring and dangerous task. The breezes which now blew over France spoke but faintly of shepherds and their lambs, but told in a clarion voice, loud and shrill, of freedom and equality and the rights of man; and the young Count, once so haughty, having caught the fever of the times, was going to join the Marquis de la Fayette, and to fight with him for American liberty. He might come back, indeed, from the war; but he might also leave his young bones in that strange land and never more see the face of Phyllis.

"Nay; I may come back," he said, hopefully. "I may come back, Phyllis."

"Then, promise that you will," she cried, almost impetuously, "for if you promise, I know you will do it."

The pathetic faith of this poor forlorn child went to the young

Count's heart. He did not promise, but he looked down in her face with tender pity. This little Phyllis, whom he remembered bright as a rose, was now pale as a lily. Her eyes were sad, her lips were wan, her young beauty had vanished; only her golden hair was unchanged, also that little black mole which nestled near her dimpled chin. It was by that mole he had known her again, and now, as he looked at it, his heart began to beat. Then all at once the dream of his boyhood came back to him, and it returned with the fervour of his young manhood.

"Phyllis," he said, with some vehemence, "I do promise to come back to you, but you must also keep the promise you made seven years ago. Will you?"

Phyllis too remembered that old compact, for her little face became very red, but she said, "Yes," at once.

The Count drew a gold ring from his little finger, and put it upon the biggest finger he could find in her childish hand, but it was still too large, and would fit none.

"I shall wear it round my neck," said Phyllis, joyfully; "I know they would take it from me."

"Until you give me back that ring—my mother's wedding-ring," said the Count, "I am yours; and until I ask it again you are mine. Is it so?"

"Yes," said Phyllis, turning pale with the solemnity of the pledge; "it is so."

"And now we must part; good-bye, my Phyllis; good-bye, my dear wife."

They rose. The Count took this childish wife of his in his arms and kissed the black mole on her cheek with tender devotion. No knight ever loved his lady, no young bridegroom ever loved his young bride, more fondly than the young Count loved this little pale, sorrowful Phyllis then.

"Good-bye," she sobbed; "good-bye, but oh! do come back soon; and oh! please will you get me some watercresses before you go?"

"Ay, that I will," said Corydon, setting his teeth; "but let them dare to use you so much longer, my Phyllis; let them!"

When he had gathered watercresses enough, he said again that it was time to go, and again they parted. Phyllis kissed her lover and kissed Fidèle; then the young man rode away, and his dog followed him, not without casting a wistful look behind; and Phyllis, sitting down once more on the edge of the pool, felt very sorrowful and very happy; for if her fairy prince was gone, "He will come back," thought Phyllis; "he will come back."

The young Count too had his thoughts as he rode away. Little childish Phyllis, the watercresses, and his mother's ring were all running in his head. He felt rather astonished to find himself solemnly

pledged to a child with a black mole. What if the black mole were at the bottom of it all ! Magic was not quite over yet in those days, and witches all had moles. Was his little Phyllis a witch ? "She may be what she likes," thought the young soldier of La Fayette, with a great throb of love at his heart. "Never shall I wed another woman than this one—never, never."

In the meanwhile Phyllis went home with her watercresses, and caught a bad cold for having been wet, and a severe scolding for having remained out so long. And the young Count, who left Saint Brice that same night, saw the King in Versailles, and told him her story. So before the week was out, before even the Count sailed across the Atlantic, his Majesty sent down a special messenger to remove Mdle. de la Faille from the house of Madame du Mésnil and place her in a convent, to be educated there with other noble damsels, until her father should take her once more under his own care.

(Concluded next month.)



TOO BRIGHT TO LAST.

How radiant once was life to me !
 So deck'd with flowers,
 That nought but sunbeams could I see
 To gild the hours.

To breathe, to move was strange delight ;
 To feel, to dream
 That all things new and fair to sight
 Were what they seem.

Could I recall those sunny years
 And not the pain,
 The cloudless morn and not the tears,
 'Twere all in vain.

Like some old tree by tempest torn,
 Now is my heart
 Riven, but not of green leaves shorn ;
 Fresh still in part !

A. K. B.

FANNY BURNEY.

IT was the days of back-boards and samplers. Female beauty was at a premium, as it always was and always will be while the world lasts. Female political activity was highly prized, too, for just then that sort of thing was the fashion. Female drawing-room wit was looked upon as a very pretty commodity, worthy to be worn by a duchess with her diamonds. But female authorship was down in the very dust of the streets, and was considered only fit for a vagabond mad woman such as poor Charlotte Smith.

At this period there came tripping into a London nursery, just in the very centre of all the gossip and pleasure of the town, a little girl called Fanny Burney. Seeing that the three ways of distinction above named were the only ones that at that time were open to women, it seemed likely, as little Fanny passed from the nursery into the school-room, and began to develop in mind and body, that she would never do anything but sit by her own fireside, and perhaps achieve wonders in worsted work. Her figure was short, and not remarkable for grace, and her features were common-place. Though interested in some degree in politics—as no one could help being in those days, when party spirit permeated every rank in society—she never entered into any violent disputes about them. She was very reserved and shy in general company, and seemed almost to fear the sound of her own voice.

It was lucky for this plain little girl that she had a father who did not exactly agree with the then most popular form of opinion about female education. Dr. Burney was a sweet-tempered, large-hearted man, who could not understand why girls should not enjoy a certain amount of mental cultivation. Of course they were not to be taught Greek or Latin, or mathematics, like boys: such enormities as that never came within the scope of even the good doctor's imagination, any more than it did that a daughter of his could ever be known in print. But according to his way of thinking, a woman might learn enough to give her something to employ her mind if ever she had to sit alone, and to prevent her, when any other topic was mentioned in society beyond dress or the newest scandal, from making a dangerous leap in the dark if she were quick-witted, and if she were stupid, from stumbling at once into a swamp of hopeless silence.

The Miss Burneys were well grounded in French and Italian, were given clear ideas in history and geography, were allowed to read translations of the classics, and had a correct musical taste instilled into them.

Over this latter branch of their teaching their musically-gifted father, no doubt, especially presided. Throughout her life Fanny, though no great musical performer, always seems to have known good music from bad.

There was a better teaching, however, for the embryo novelist than any that books or governesses or masters could afford, at her father's table, and in his drawing-room, where often gathered all the greatest men of the day. There flashed the wit of Garrick. There rolled forth the stately sentences of Johnson. There were spread out all the rich stores of anecdote and information that fell from the tongue of Barretti.

Besides these grand talkers and thinkers, a crowd of smaller folk filled Dr. Burney's rooms, for he lived in the very deepest whirlpool of London society. There were young gentlemen that affected foreign airs, and young ladies that affected a fashionable drawl; old gentlemen that could never forget they had once been young, and old ladies that delighted in gaudy colours.

In a corner sat the plain little daughter of the house, catching each word that fell from the lips of genius, and storing it up in her retentive memory; thinking what a delightful thing it must be to be a star, such as all these men were, and looking as closely into each trick of eye or hand of all the men and women there as a scholar looks into the characters of a difficult MS. Strangers did not disturb her; there was nothing in her face or manner to interest them; if they thought about her at all, they no doubt imagined that she was settling what would be the best combination of colours in the next purse she should net.

Her relations also let her amuse herself in her own way in society, though it was certainly very different from that of other people. They loved her for her affectionate words and deeds towards them, and for the shrewd sayings with which she often brightened the family breakfast-table; and so, like the sensible, easy-tempered folk they were, they let her quietly be. Probably their ambition for her was a very moderate one; its utmost extent most likely being that one day she should change her name for that of some respectable middle-aged clergyman or barrister.

Fanny watched and watched and watched, caring very little what the people around her thought of her, but, on her side, thinking a great deal about them, until at length an irresistible desire seemed to grow upon her to turn into word-portraits the thoughts and observations of which her mind was so full. This longing grew so strong that at last, in the silence of her own room, when no one was by, she yielded to it. By degrees what were at first but scattered sketches formed themselves almost without her knowing how, into a consecutive narrative, in which a heroine lovely as Lady Crewe or the Duchess of Devonshire, or any of the other worshipped beauties of the day, made her way hither and thither among groups, some laughing, some sad, some grimacing: all

life-like in their way, according to the life in the midst of which she had moved since childhood. Her characters often seem to us strange and unnatural; and, in truth, one of Fanny Burney's great faults as a novelist was a tendency to over-draw; but when we accuse her of this, we must, at the same time, remember the difference in manners between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

When her first longing was thus satisfied of seeing clearly upon paper what had been so clear in her mind, it was replaced by another. How strange and amusing it would be to see what she had written in print! How terrible, and yet how delightful, to know what the rest of the world would think of it! To become an authoress was, however, a most frightful and tremendous plunge for a young woman of that day, and her doubts and hesitations spread over a very large space of time.

At length, encouraged by her sisters, who were now in the secret, she went to her father's study, MS. in hand, and revealed the awful fact: she had written a novel and wanted to publish it. At first Dr. Burney stared blankly, as well he might. Who could have expected such a thing as this from his silent daughter Fanny. Then he glanced at the MS., but only glanced, for just then he was plunged heart and soul in some of his beloved musical studies; he had engagements for the afternoon, and had no time to waste.

After that he gave a few minutes to thinking over the matter. The idea of one of his daughters being an authoress was certainly a very new one; but being a quiet-tempered, brave man, he grasped it and looked into it, and found there was nothing so terrible about it, after all. The pen certainly could not be called an unfeminine tool, and as for a sheet of white paper, why, there was no denying that it was quite a lady-like thing. Most likely the book would fall dead from the press; if it did not, and if it ever became a little known, and the fact leaked out who was the authoress, he was quite sure Fanny would have written nothing of which a woman need be ashamed. So he ended by kissing his daughter and telling her, in that sweet-tempered, easy way which made him so beloved by his own family, that she might do just as she liked about her book; then he went back to his writing-table and quickly forgot all about the whole affair in a maze of tetrachords and fugues.

It is impossible to exonerate Dr. Burney's conduct from blame in this matter. Out of mere indolence, he failed to give his daughter help and advice, at a time when both were greatly needed by an inexperienced girl. Had he been active in Fanny's cause as a father ought to have been, "Evelina" never would have been sold to a publisher for £20 as it ultimately was.

At last the book was printed and published. Fanny went about her familiar employments at home, trembling and palpitating; partly because she thought herself bound in duty so to do, and partly because

she was really anxious with an author's healthy anxiety. A month had not gone by before every drawing-room in town was ringing with the name of "Evelina." The book was laid to the account of every man of genius in turn. Fashionable ladies smiled and looked arch, and were well pleased when they were accused of it. People in the country woke up from their normal state of intellectual dulness and implored their friends in town to send them a copy. It was such an entirely new thing to have an amusing book written in simple English, that every one could understand, written about things that every one had experienced more or less; written, most wonderful of all, in such a tone that everybody, even the youngest girls, might read it; and this book, moreover, was a novel, a sort of literary composition that has always made its way quicker than any other into the homes of common-place men and women.

The name of the author soon rose to the surface of the sea of conjecture, as such secrets always do. In a moment Fanny leapt from being the obscure little Miss Burney into the position of one of the chief lions of London society. No wonder that such a change turned somewhat her head, and that from that time forward she became possessed by a certain amount of vanity, which clung to her to the end of her days.

This was the brightest and most glorious part of Fanny Burney's long life. Men began to seek her society, and Fanny, like all her sex on such occasions, was equal to the situation, and developed quickly into the demure flirt which she remained until she was quite an old woman. Duchesses and countesses caressed her. At public assemblies she was stared at as much as any of the most well-known beauties. Many interesting pictures rise up before us as we look back at this period of her story; and we cannot help pausing to glance at a few of them.

Far enough from London to be in the country, and yet near enough to catch the sound of every wave of social and political gossip that floats from the capital, we see a friendly-looking house in a pretty setting of shrubberies and pleasure grounds. There are no armorial bearings in the hall that tell of long descent; but the armorial bearings of wealth are to be seen on all sides, in the shape of soft carpets and gilded cornices. The master of this splendid house helps Fanny Burney from her carriage as if she were a princess. The lady with the pretty, piquante, wilful face who stands on the doorstep folds her fondly in her arms. Throughout her chequered life Fanny Burney probably never spent happier hours than those she passed beneath the roof of Thrale, the great brewer, and his charming, many-sided wife.

Miss Burney is on good terms, too, with another young lady who is a constant inmate at the Thrales' house, though this young lady is in some sort a rival, inasmuch that, as Fanny Burney is herself a prodigy

among the women of that day, in the way of being an authoress, this young lady is a prodigy in the way of being a classical scholar. In her calm, faultless beauty, she looks as cold as a Greek statue, and yet, within the marble there is so much of the coquette that she can't even let poor middle-aged married Mr. Thrale be free from her snares. A sweet smile is always upon her lips, and yet she possesses the strange accomplishment of crying any moment to amuse her friends, just as any other woman might sing or play. She has the deep learning of a college don, yet somehow her talk is shallow. This lady is Sophy Stretfield.

One day Fanny comes fluttering and blushing into the room, where an elderly man sits upon a sofa. He is awkwardly built, and his features are plain, yet, in spite of that, we are interested in him at once, for his face is marked with the graving tool of genius. His voice is rough, but there are kindly cadences in it. At first Fanny is very shy and silent with him. By degrees, however, she sinks into the seat at his side; by degrees the large arm creeps round the slender waist, and before they part the old man's lips press the girl's brow. Never was there a closer friendship between man and woman than that which existed between old Samuel Johnson and Fanny Burney from that hour forward until the day when she sat sobbing on the stairs outside the door of the room where he lay dying.

This afternoon there is a grand dinner party in the house of the wealthy brewer. Every one round the table has a handle to his or her name, a handle ornamented with a coronet, or a handle round which laurels are twined; laurels of war, laurels of literature, or political laurels which are a trifle dusty. One man, however, quickly distinguishes himself from the rest of the company, brilliant though it is. His tongue is a very enchanter's wand; as you listen to him he makes you believe that a goose is a swan, and then again that a swan is a goose, in the same five minutes. Touched by him the most common-place events are turned into thrilling stories. His expressive face keeps silent accompaniment to his words. Fanny hangs upon his lips as does every one else; how can they help it? But suddenly she starts and glows; those wonderful eyes are turned full upon her, and he ends an animated sentence with the words, "No, not even Miss Burney's imagination could do that." That was the first compliment paid her by Edmund Burke.

A man somewhat past middle age, with a calm, observant face, a quiet voice, and an ear-trumpet in his hand, sits often at the Thrales' fire-side. When he is there Mrs. Thrale flutters a good deal round Fanny, arranging her ribbons and trying to make her talk her best; but though he seems to like a chat well enough with the young authoress the gentleman won't do what he is wanted to do, and Miss Burney never becomes Lady Reynolds, the great painter's wife.

To-night we are at a grand gathering in London. Lights and jewels and eyes are shining ; but brighter than all flashes the wit of one man. Even the air around him must surely be sparkling with fun. The veriest sluggard of a brain that ever slumbered in a human skull must awake up at contact with him. Yet even in the midst of one of his proudest social triumphs, Sheridan pauses to tell Fanny Burney that she is the first woman of her day. But we must dwell no longer on such pictures, for there is still much to tell.

In due time "*Cecilia*" followed "*Evelina*." It is the best of Miss Burney's novels ; but even had it been the worst, it would have been well received by the public on account of its elder sister's success. This time the author's interests were attended to, and the publishers did not have it all their own way.

We now come to the greatest mistake in Fanny Burney's life. Queen Charlotte took it into her head, why or wherefore it is impossible to say—for the royal mind was certainly guiltless of any literary flavour—to wish to attach the novelist to her own household. She offered her the place of maid of honour, which was then vacant. The authoress herself hesitated ; but her relations, and especially her father, one of whose faults was always a too close clinging to the skirts of greatness, threw in their influence on the Queen's side, and the place was accepted. Fanny Burney went from her well-won queendom in the kingdom of letters to serve in a palace.

There is little pleasure in dwelling on the several years she spent in the royal household. The ink-bottle was laid aside for the care of silks and velvets. The compliments of Burke and Sheridan were exchanged for the insipid common-places of equeries with three-quarter's of an idea in their heads, and the sparkling chat of Mrs. Thrale for the company of the snappish old German frau who was her companion in her office, and whose thoughts were all contained in a snuff-box and a cribbage-board. Her body, which was delicately organised, like the bodies of most artists, whether of the brush or the pen, but which had been healthy and active in the ease of home-life, gave way in the constant waiting on a mistress who certainly never erred on the side of too great indulgence to her servants, and she suffered from frequent physical weakness. Her position, of course, gave her certain privileges, such as her view of Warren Hastings' trial ; but these were far outweighed by the incessant restraint in which she was forced to live. She tried to make her relations, and even herself, believe that she loved her gilded chains ; but the truth often peeps out painfully in her journals and letters.

With time things got worse instead of better ; the servant grew weaker, the mistress more exacting. It is impossible to help feeling indignant with Queen Charlotte for her conduct towards Miss Burney at this period. Not a moment was lessened in the time which

etiquette appointed that the fainting maid of honour must stand ; the bell had to be answered, though the weary limbs were literally dragged up the palace stairs ; when sinking with inanition on a journey, she might not even eat a biscuit in the Queen's presence. Surely a little kindly care for one so near her own person would have become the Queen, the mother of her people, more than her diamonds, even though the sufferer had been a common-place young lady, instead of one of the first women of genius of her day.

Among the gentlemen attached to the Court there was one who was a man of taste and reading. Naturally enough, Miss Burney preferred his society to that of any other of her companions ; and naturally enough, too, she first drifted into a sober flirtation with him, and then into what, on the lady's side, was very like love. What it was on that of the gentleman, it is impossible to say ; we can only judge from the end, which was that just when Fanny Burney was expecting him to speak the decisive word, she heard he had brought home a pretty young wife.

This disappointment put the finishing stroke to what the burden of weary service had long been doing. Her health entirely gave way, and with a pretty trifle by way of remembrance, and a small pension, she left the royal household.

Rest, and the care of loving friends, and skilful medical advice soon restored her. The best tonic, however, was the society of a certain M. d'Arblay, a French refugee. D'Arblay was a soldier and a gentleman, and a man of much mind and character. This tonic did its work so well, that before long Fanny Burney threw off her invalid wrappers and bloomed forth as Madame d'Arblay the bride.

The marriage was a happy one. The pair were poor ; for the greater part of M. d'Arblay's fortune had been lost in the French revolution ; but only one child, a boy, came ; and "Camilla," Fanny's third book, made an important addition to the family purse. They lived in a pretty suburban cottage, and were brightened by the visits of many friends.

This quiet home happiness was not, however, to last for many years for Madame d'Arblay. After the peace of Amiens, D'Arblay crossed the channel, called by family business ; and his wife soon followed him. Just after that, war broke out afresh between France and England, and for many years Madame d'Arblay was forced to live in a foreign land, only receiving, now and then, scanty news of English friends. This was no small distress to her, loving her own relations as she did. The exigencies of his position also made her husband frequently absent from her.

She made friends, however, in Paris, and was cheerful in the main, and interested in all around her. She saw Napoleon ride on his white charger into the court of the Tuileries, and made acquaintance with Madame la Fayette.

Madame d'Arblay was in Brussels at the time of the battle of Waterloo, and went through that agony of glory which was the share of all English women who were in the Belgian capital during those memorable three days. She trembled for her husband, who was in a regiment on the side of the allies.

M. and Madame d'Arblay returned to England after the peace of 1815, and glided together quietly and lovingly down the decline of life. Her husband died before her, and so did her son. This latter loss was a cruel blow to her old age; but deep religious faith and a cheerful temper upheld her to the last; and the authoress of "Evelina" passed away honoured and tranquil, and full of days.

ALICE KING.



TUBEROSES.

TAKE them away from me, darling !
Throw them into the street—
Out where their delicate freshness
Will be crushed by passing feet.

Their heavy, oppressive sweetness
Is worse than the odour of death :
I am sick and faint ; and their presence
Is stifling my very breath .

You did not know that I loved him ?
Then for you I will open the door
Of my heart's most secret temple—
That never was opened before.

In a maze of enrapturing madness,
I worshipped him day by day :
Till at length I woke from my dream-
ing
To find that my idol was clay. —

Fold far back the curtains,
Let in the night air now :
Perhaps it will quiet my pulses ;
Perhaps cool my burning brow. —

Do you yet remember that evening,
When the haughty Lady Clare
Swept past me with white tuberoses
In the braids of her midnight hair ?

I remember their sickly fragrance,
And my soul's despairing thrill :

What a dirge crept into the music,
How the air grew heavy and chill !

She was beautiful ; proud as a princess ;
And the charm of her wonderful eyes
Would have won a seraph's allegiance
From an angel in the skies.

I saw him bending o'er her,
Till his bright hair swept her cheek ;
And the love in his ardent glances
His lips scarce dared to speak.

And later I watched them dancing,
With a dreary, bitter pain,
And saw him press her jewelled hands,
With a numb, bewildered brain.

Ah well, sweet friend, I will tell you :
She won him—and that is all ;
And the clouds that drape my life since
then
Are black as a funeral pall.

Then take them away from me, darling !
Throw them into the street—
Out where their delicate freshness
Will be crushed by passing feet.

For a breath of their faintest odour
Brings back that bitter night,
When the midnight gloom for ever
Shut out life's golden light.

NELLY'S VALENTINE.

BY ANNE BEALE.

THERE is little doubt that most pretty women like what is called "innocent flirtation." It is not at all necessary to visit the ball-rooms of the aristocracy to find flirts and coquettes : they are quite as numerous amongst the rural lanes and villages of the country district ; and, in spite of the danger of incurring the imputation of being an encourager of such pert damsels, we must confess that your regular coquettish village beauty is a very amusing and attractive individual. Human nature is much the same, whether in court or cottage, and beauty and a certain sort of *espièglerie*, are quite as common or uncommon in the one as the other. To many sparkling and lovely women, a power of fascination and desire of admiration are as natural as to look in the glass ; to others they are imparted by degrees, as the knowledge of their capabilities dawns upon them. This is like all other learning, and to be acquired gradually. Sweet is the consciousness of the first conquest to the coquette ; but it is not until she has conquered all around her, that the coquette is satisfied. Of course this is very naughty. We would not for worlds uphold such a system, but here and there there are such delightful, open, mischievous little flirts, that whilst you scold them, you cannot help loving them. Still there is a nice distinction to be drawn between the flirt and the coquette, but we must be pardoned for not diving into the metaphysics of the subject in this sketch of a village damsel, who possessed a fair share of the attributes of both.

When, where, and how Nelly Morris first learnt her early lessons in this abstruse art, it seems impossible to say. It may be that she was one of those with whom it was born. If not, she must have picked up instruction from the streams, birds, and insects, that murmured, warbled, and buzzed their teaching in her ear, for she was bred in the very heart of the woods and fields. The cottage of her parents stood quite alone, on the brink of a clear little stream, at the bottom of a meadow, and they had half a mile's walk, through beaten foot-paths and lanes, to gain the turnpike-road. Her father was a labourer of steady, regular habits ; her mother a quiet, homely body.

But Nelly, when she was grown to woman's estate, came to reside in our town. The change from a cottage by a brook, in the midst of fields, to a small country town, was as great to Nelly as would be that of a sudden transportation of a country-town belle to the metropolis. A stray caller or foot-passenger going by the house had been a person of vast importance to her, her mother, and younger brothers and sisters,

for they rarely saw a stranger, except on market-days and Sundays; but in her new position, she had but to stand at the door to behold at least three or four people at once! Astounding gaiety! It must have been a very wet day indeed, when that number was not visible; and she was not long in attracting nearly as many to herself, whenever she made her appearance.

Nelly began her career as nursemaid in a small tradesman's family; but that did not quite suit her: carrying a baby was decidedly disagreeable, and bad for the figure. She preferred trying her fortunes in a decent public-house, where she might find remuneration and amusement at the same time: so she scrubbed the floors, washed the dishes, drew the ale, lighted the fires, and flirted to her heart's content at the "Half Moon" for about a twelvemonth. But she was a girl of an aspiring turn of mind. In spite of the real enjoyment she had in her new place, she did not think it genteel enough for her; she must get into respectable service. So she went as maid-of-all-work to a very strict-minded old lady, who resided a little way out of the town. Here she was tolerably demure for some weeks, and a miracle of cleanliness.

But, alas for human patience! she was in a house where "followers" had never been allowed. Nelly without beaux, was Nelly without more than two-thirds of her nature. Her mistress watched one, two, three, four—she was tired of counting them—young men talking to this forward girl. In short, no one passed the house that had not a pleasant word or a compliment for "Mrs. Jones, the Cottage's" smart servant. Mrs. Jones spoke out her disapprobation loudly, and said she expected her servant to be steady, and always in the house; not standing at the back door, gossiping with whomsoever chanced to pass that way. Nelly wondered whether Mrs. Jones expected to get anyone who would shut themselves out from society and have nobody to talk to but herself and her cat. For her part, she had been used to see people, and could not live in such a melancholy way; so if Mrs. Jones expected it, they had better part. She! the minx! who had been bred and born in the country! But Tom Howells, and Samuel Jenkins, and Mat Lewis, and various others quite agreed with her in thinking she was not a girl to be shut up with an old lady in the country—at least on the turnpike, out of the town—so, after a few lectures from Mrs. Jones, and retorts from Nelly, the pair separated, not without many warnings from the former, touching the impropriety of a young girl's talking to young men of an evening, at the back door or through the kitchen window.

Nelly had a great mind to try an inn again, it was so amusing; but, then, her newly acquired gentility! She was too ambitious to retrograde in the world. It so happened that we wanted a servant, and Nelly, hearing of the chance of taking another step in life, came to offer.

We shall not forget the first appearance of this young damsel and her mother. Mrs. Morris entered, followed by her daughter, each curt-

seying in time and tune to the measure of the other. The mother was rather tall, thin, upright, of bronzed complexion and of great seriousness of countenance. The daughter was exactly the reverse. Rather short, plump, of pink-and-white complexion, and of the utmost jollity of countenance. They were dressed much alike, which made the contrast still more remarkable. The smooth black hat, red and black striped flannel gown, full-bordered cap and small shawl, seemed identical, until you analyzed them a little. The elder's were scrupulously plain, and put on with an exemplary neatness and precision that told of prudence and sobriety at a glance; the younger's had a more jaunty air, that you felt but could not describe. There were a few most becoming pink loops of satin ribbon in the border of the cap, that looked, in the presence of the prim head-gear of the parent, half-ashamed of themselves. There was a splendid red and yellow border to the kerchief, that quite cast into the shade the sober brown of its companion. Moreover, there was a bow of pink ribbon confining a small plain collar, that evidently did not know whether it ought to appear or not, and which we perceived Nelly trying to hide under her shawl. The petticoats of the daughter were also much fuller, and fell more gracefully than did the scanty, tucked-up skirts of the mother, and they were moreover less unfashionably short, and did not display quite so much of the foot and ankle. You perceived the hand of progress in the attire of the maiden, which the matron, like many others of her age and country, utterly disdained.

Mrs. Morris could not speak English, and we could not speak Welsh. Nelly "had a little English," but had not the fluency she afterwards acquired in the tongue her country was slowly and unwillingly adopting. When we addressed the mother in English, she looked at her daughter, who appeared so very shy and modest that we fancied we should make little of her. We were deceived in our first impressions, which were drawn from a head hanging very much over a pair of bright green cotton gloves, that were pulling one another out of shape. But when we addressed her directly, so as to require an answer, such a pair of eyes looked up from the green gloves as do not fall to many of her sex. Those eyes were an agreeable surprise; they were such uncommon eyes, so purely hazel and lustrous, and so indescribably mischievous. They were full of little sunbeams, shooting out rays on all sides. Golden hazel was the true colour. They laughed when they looked at you, and you wondered whether their owner were really indulging in a sally of mirth at your expense or not. The dimples in the fair, round cheeks would not be kept in order, and Nelly had not been five minutes in the room, before she showed a set of the whitest and most regular teeth that it was ever our lot to look upon, sparkling beneath the reddest lips in the world. It would evidently have been impossible for Nelly to help laughing. We could not tell whether it was boldness, gaiety

of heart, or shyness, but the laugh came almost as naturally as the words, and she never dreamt that it was wrong to laugh. Her mother looked at her reprovingly, but Nelly did not choose to understand.

There was something in the girl that took you by storm: so forward, yet so innocent; so vain, yet so unconscious of vanity; so perfectly at ease, yet so well-mannered.

Of course we put the usual questions, but we might as well have let them alone, for Nelly, in her own estimation, could do everything. She was, if you could bring yourself to believe her, a first-rate cook, house-maid, parlour-maid, nurse—in short, had we wanted her as lady's-maid she would have declared herself equal to the situation. When we came to the "character," she laughed more merrily than ever.

"Upon my deed, ma'am, I don't know if Mrs. Jones will give me one; but she have no call not; the old scold!" was her answer.

By degrees we elicited that she was to leave Mrs. Jones because it was so "lonesome" in the country that she could not help talking to the people as they went by, and Mrs. Jones expected her to be "deaf and dumb." If Mrs. Jones would not give her a character, Mrs. Thomas, "the Half Moon," would.

We were scandalized at the idea of an inn. We were afraid she was accustomed to gay and giddy habits, and we required a very steady servant who would never leave the house.

"Upon my deed, ma'am—when I say upon my deed, I——"

Here she was stopped short for want of the necessary English word, but we gathered that what she said "upon her deed," she invariably kept. "Indeed," and "Upon my deed," are slight Welsh oaths, stronger than the English "Upon my word and honour."

With some difficulty Nelly at last made us understand that, once in our service, she should never want to go out. She was naturally fond of being in the house, where there was always plenty to do. She liked working at her needle when she had time, and would be very glad to do sewing-work for us if we wished it. In short, if Nelly's account of herself were true, she would turn out the most wonderful servant that ever exacting mistress could possess. But that mistress must have been credulous beyond the credulity of mistresses in general, who believed one-third of what Nelly said. White lies evidently flowed as glibly from her mouth as truth; more glibly, I verily believe, for they came naturally, and she had generally to consider a little before she spoke the truth.

However, we were fairly taken captive by her extreme freshness and cleanliness. We had had such dirty servants, that the very sight of her pure white skin, cap, and collar was refreshing. She looked as if she *must* be neat, and even Mrs. Jones allowed that she was "very tidy"—the only unqualified bit of praise we got, when we wrote for her character.

It ended in Nelly coming to us, together with her box and bundle. They were all three at-home directly, and Nelly, in a very white apron, was ready in less than an hour to bring up the tea. We had a glimpse of her character at once. We resolutely continued to look upon the books we were reading, but we could not help being struck and amused by Nelly's performances, as we glanced aside at her. Half a dozen times she arranged the tea-service in various ways, and, between each new arrangement, stood at a little distance from the table, gently smoothing her hands, to consider the effect. When she was quite satisfied with her endeavours, she glanced over her shoulder at the mirror that surmounted the mantle-piece. There must have been a bow out of place somewhere, for she put her hand to her head, then glanced again at the mirror. Apparently pleased with the result of the last glance, she turned to reconsider the tea-service.

"Will that please you, ma'am?" she said, with a demure curtsy, letting her hands meet upon her white apron.

"Thank you—very nicely," we said, looking up from our books at the most regularly appointed tea-table we had ever had. Every cup and saucer was at an equal distance from its neighbour—every spoon at the right side of the cup—every plate arranged with mathematical precision. We were expecting a few friends, and Nelly must have been doubly anxious, for she said, "Will the company like their chairs put, please, ma'am?" There was another smoothing of the hands and glance over the shoulder into the glass as she left the room, which were frequently repeated during tea-time.

It was very evident that Nelly intended to take an interest in every person and thing belonging to us. She attended all our guests, most rigorously insisted on uncloaking and unshawling them, whether they would or not; placed all the footstools she could muster before their feet, and finally lingered so long that we were obliged to say, "Thank you, that will do," as a hint for her to leave the room.

But by degrees Nelly's bright, cheerful, cleanly face won the hearts of visitors as well as mistresses. She had a laugh, a curtsy, and a "how d'ye do?" for everyone that knocked at the door, gentle or simple. If the comer repelled her seeming familiarity, she evidently did not attribute the repulse to her own demerits, but would confide to us, that, "Indeed to goodness, she didn't like that Mrs. Lewis" (or Jenkins, or what not), "she was so uncommon stiff."

The dog and bird, our especial pets, were soon quite as much Nelly's property as our own. She was so proud to show off the talents of that prince of terriers, Gipsy, that we have seen him "sitting up" with a piece of bread on his head and a paper pipe in his mouth, on our very door-step, waiting for her to count six, surrounded by open-mouthed and highly diverted children of various ages. When the "six" was uttered, and the piece of bread went one way and the pipe another,

the shout of laughter was quite a scandal to our well-ordered household. We must be allowed, however, to have our share of pride in the exploits of Gip, and could scarcely reprimand Nelly for doing in her circle, what we were constantly doing in ours—displaying him to the best advantage.

It was pleasant and amusing to watch Nelly and Gip start upon their various errands. Nelly, attired in the most becoming costume, would be sure to meet a young man, who would be as sure to stop and speak to her, whilst Gip would alternately pull her short petticoats with a snarley “come on” sort of noise, and bark and snap at the feet of her admirer, in most ungracious defiance. And Gip helped on many a flirtation in this way—most unconsciously on his own part.

As to Nelly’s admirers, they were not to be counted. If we ventured to expostulate, she would laugh her merry laugh and declare that the young men *would* talk to her, and that it would not be civil to pass them by without answering their questions. This was incontrovertible.

We observed two beaux of superior appearance, who used to pass and re-pass the house very frequently, stealing glances from under their hats into the windows, and we were afraid that Nelly encouraged them both. We once saw them meet before the door, and scowl ominously at each other; then they suddenly vanished from before our dwelling and did not appear again. We had our own surmises concerning the very dark, handsome, but somewhat sinister-looking young cabinet-maker, who was an attractive individual to many of our damsels, but we kept them to ourselves, and fervently hoped that he might never come near Nelly again. As regarded the fair, honest-looking tailor, we rather inclined towards him, though he was certainly not as good-looking as his rival. Which of these beaux it was that had carried off the greater proportion of Nelly’s heart we could not discover; but she was grave and sedate for three whole days after their sudden disappearance, and scarcely went out of the house, unless imperative duty called her, for nearly a week. Matters wore rather a depressed aspect from Christmas until the fourteenth of February, when Valentine’s Day seemed to bring a “change o’er the spirit of her dream.”

We were all in anxious expectation of letters. If the birds tell their loves to one another and get married on this auspicious morning, why should not unfeathered choristers chirp out their half-fledged affections? We will not say how many letters we received, nor how many of them were valentines, but we had our share, and spent a profitable hour or so in wondering from whom they came.

But, Nelly! had she any valentines? We knew of the admiration she excited amongst our rustic swains, and longed to ascertain if it had found vent in these delightful missives. We had strong suspicions that she could not write, and had volunteered to teach her that useful art, but she said she had not patience to make such unnatural strokes and

turnings. Could she read writing? was the natural question. It was satisfactorily answered on the evening of the sentimental day. We perceived that Nelly had something of importance to communicate. When the tea-service was fairly cleared off, she still came to and fro in perpetual turmoil for every imaginable excuse. What had she broken? Could it be one of the best plates, or a cup and saucer, or, worse still, the sugar-basin? By means of deep religious and theological lectures upon lying, we had made her occasionally confess to such delinquencies; but then she usually rushed into the room with the broken article in her hand, a scared grin on her face, and a "Please, ma'am, I'm very sorry," on her lips. No; we had for the present escaped further losses in the way of crockery.

At last Nelly stood before the table, her head drooping, her dimples in full play, and a huge letter in her hand.

"Please, ma'am ——" a pause.

"What, Nelly—a letter?"

Here a little laugh broke out, and the white teeth were visible. She fidgeted awhile with the letter, and at last, making a great effort, said she had received it that morning, but had not been able to read it.

"A valentine, Nelly?" we asked, maliciously.

The dimples and white teeth were again displayed.

"He! he! Yes, ma'am, miss. I wasn't choosing for any of them girls to read her. She is very pretty."

We must here state, that although Nelly's English was improved, she had not yet learnt the neuter gender. To her everything was still either masculine or feminine.

Before we unfolded the large letter, we glanced, with ill-dissembled curiosity, at the address. It was in a fine clerkly hand, written with due care and thought, and with splendid flourish. Nelly evidently considered that we did not know how properly to free the letter from its envelope, and moved restlessly as we began.

"She too large for the cover," she said at last, as we found it difficult to extract the kernel from the shell.

Now Nelly was a picture for an artist. We should have liked a sketch of her at that moment. Fun and bashfulness strove together in her face, and made cheeks and eyes glow like Christmas fires. She was, as usual, playing with her hands, or rather with a smart bit of lace that adorned her sleeve-band. When we fairly opened the letter, she gave a suppressed titter; but we were soon lost in admiration. Nothing vulgar greeted us; none of the common herd of valentines full of red cupids and redder hearts, but the most elegant of designs in lace paper and gold. A border of flowers and leaves and birds, all snow-white, and in the centre what looked to be a square of gold and green. We wondered what hidden meaning lay under this type, and began to fear "green and yellow jealousy." But Nelly came to the rescue.

"He, he! She do open, she do," she volunteered, touching the centre piece reverently.

To our great admiration, the green and gold proved two folding doors, which, when unclosed, revealed a painting of the loveliest of damsels with the most graceful of youths at her feet.

We glanced up at Nelly, who was looking at us to watch the effect produced by this wonder of art. Giving us an expressive nod, she said, "That isn't all, for there's reading by here."

She pointed to a piece of silver paper still left in the envelope; we drew it forth, and found enclosed an embossed card, on which was a copy of verses entitled "Forget me not."

We began to read them aloud, and Nelly began to titter. We read on, and she laughed outright.

"Deet! and that's fullish!" she exclaimed.

"They are very pretty verses, Nelly," we remarked.

"Will you just be reading him again, please, ma'am, that I may recollect," she said.

We read, and Nelly laughed merrily.

"Shall you remember them?" we asked, finishing our second reading.

"If you would be pleased to read them only wanst more?" she suggested.

We repeated the lection, much to her satisfaction.

Again the depths of the big envelope were searched, and lying perdu in one corner was something that felt like a crown-piece, but turned out to be a gigantic white peppermint-drop, with a red-lettered but not illuminated surface. "I love you well" was the motto we had the pleasure of reading to Nelly, which caused a laugh more exhilarating than ever, and a blush so bright that one fancied morning was about to dawn upon our lamp-lighted world. But Nelly was not yet satisfied. She took up the now empty envelope and turned it round.

"Is this a B, ma'am?" she asked at last.

The post-mark was ill-stamped, and it was no wonder she was puzzled. We examined it well, and, after much patience, found it to be "Aberdare." She laughed again, and we had every reason to suppose the voluminous valentine had come from the right person. We conjectured him to be one of the two beaux who had so suddenly disappeared.

Whether we were right or wrong, Nelly was gay as a lark henceforth. The finery that had been partially, and we had hoped, penitently, laid aside, was reproduced and rearranged. A propos of this finery, we must confess that Nelly was no longer the plainly-dressed maiden she was when she came to us, with only the one bit of half-concealed ribbon. She was now almost as smart as any of the smart serving-women in the place. Every piece of ribbon or lace, every

collar or handkerchief, that we had thoughtlessly cast aside, reappeared refreshed. What she did to them we could not imagine, but they looked almost new. No more Welsh flannels and strong, sensible shawls, but merinoes or paramattas, or some still slighter material. We winked at all this, but when it came to a change of caps we could bear it no longer. Be it understood, that, in those parts servants really wore caps. In the first place, Nelly's strings disappeared, together with the kerchief that was wont to conceal the white neck, so that the very snowy portion of her person, her throat, was fully revealed.

"We have a very decided objection to fly-away caps without strings, Nelly," we remarked, severely.

"Deet, ma'am, them strings do cost money, and do get so dirty," was the reply.

But we would not give up our point, so a narrow bit of ribbon was substituted for the previously broad strings. This did not last long. One evening we perceived Nelly unusually attracted by the mirror as she crossed the room. She was continually on tiptoe, glancing at the charming reflection of her own face. We looked at her, and beheld one of those flat crown-piece abominations, just covering her crown and touching her back hair. We dared not attack this nondescript article at once, lest we should lose temper; but we were dismayed to perceive how becoming it was, displaying her rich brown hair and bringing out the *espièglerie* of her countenance.

We nerved ourselves to address her the next morning, when she was clad in discreeter costume.

"Nelly, if you wear those ridiculous caps you had on last night, we cannot keep you in our service. They are not respectable."

"Law, ma'am, all the girls do wear them. They are cheaper than them old-fashioned borders."

But we stood our ground, and discomfited her for three whole days. The fly-aways were abandoned, and she was very unhappy. On the fourth, the head was adorned as before. Fashion and becomingness got the better of obedience. She looked bashful when we glanced at her.

"So you are determined to wear those caps, Nelly. Then ——"

"Oh, ma'am, please! I ask your pardon. The others is all dirty, and seure this is very purty, and everyone do say she do suit me better than them old things."

"You will wash the others, and wear them," we said, imperatively.

After this, old and new alternated, until at last the old only appeared under the Sunday hat—for Nelly still wore the becoming Welsh beaver.

We were obliged to yield or give warning, and we could not part with Nelly.

To return to our valentine. Some days after Nelly received it, the postman's rap sounded and no letters reached us.

"Where are the letters, Nelly?" we inquired.

"None for anyone but me, ma'am," she replied, with conscious dignity, proud of the receipt of a second epistle.

In the evening, Nelly again appeared with a letter in her hand.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am, but—if missus don't mind——"

"You would like to hear your letter read, Nelly?"

"The girls do make fun and laff, if they are reading him."

"I will read it with pleasure."

We took the letter—delightful sight! A genuine and discreet love-letter, containing assurances of devotion till death, and so on. It was too much for her, as it was for us. We all laughed together, as she exclaimed, "Well, now, there's fullish he is!"

It was, nevertheless, a sensible letter; containing much less nonsense than many we had chanced to see of the same kind, written by abler penmen. There was a promise to return and claim his dear Eleanor—he did not use the abbreviated "Nelly," which probably sounded vulgar and familiar—and a hope that she was constant, and would marry him on his return.

"I hope you are constant, Nelly," we said.

"Deet, miss—ma'am—and I am not seure. Name o' goodness, does he think I be constant always? For a little bit, maybe."

"Oh, Nelly!"

"Ask your pardon, miss, but 'ould you be saying a few lines for me? I am thinking Thomas 'ould not be liking them girls to know."

We were in for writing a love-letter. It was very amusing.

"What shall I say, Nelly?"

"Oh, you do know very well, Miss, *fach*. Just as you do please. You do euse to write."

"But not your letters, Nelly. What do you wish me to say?"

"On my deet I've nothing to say, but that I'm very well, and not in no hurry to be married."

"But perhaps he won't like that."

"He, indeed! What matter? She must like it. I don't care."

It must be said that we wrote a sufficiently matter-of-fact letter, considering the occasion. We assured the lover of Nelly's health and happiness, and of her satisfaction that he was prosperous, then drew rather abruptly to a conclusion.

We read it to Nelly.

"That's famous! Dear! and there's clever!" she exclaimed.

"How would you wish to end the letter, Nelly?"

"Just as you do please. You are knowing best."

"But I don't know the sort of ending. Is it to be affectionate?"

"He, he! no, seure. He'd be proud. Yours treuly. But you are knowing best."

We compromised it by putting "yours sincerely," and so the matter ended for the present.

We thought that if there were more such love-letters, there would be less evidence in breach of promise cases.

In course of time there came another epistle. It greatly praised Nelly's "beautiful writing and polite letter," which made the little flirt show her white teeth.

"They did know at the post that you did write that letter. They are knowing your writing, miss—he, he!"

"How could they know my writing?"

We were getting rather ashamed of our part in the plot, but were not allowed to get out of it. We were trepanned by Nelly's smiles, her obliging temper, and good-servantism, into writing and reading many more love-letters, all singularly discreet, the last of which announced the tailor's intended return to his native valleys.

On the day following its arrival, Nelly came to us with a face half pleased, half disgusted.

"Beg your pardon, ma'am, but—he! he!—that old fool, Joe, the carrier."

"Well, what of him, Nelly?"

"He do want me to marry him."

"But that is impossible, because you are engaged to Thomas."

"Ah! That's what I am saying. If it wasn't for that valentine, now!"

"You are surely not repenting, Nelly?"

"Well—not 'sactly. But Joe, she tell me she have a new cart and horse of his own, and lots of money—and Thomas, she have nothing of his own."

"I hope you have not been encouraging that other man, Nelly."

"No; I tell him I have nothing to say to him. But he show me a bag of money and say it was all for me."

Nelly was evidently repenting. We gathered by degrees that if Thomas did not return soon, she was sure she could not be constant, indeed, it was only that beautiful valentine which had made her think of him at all, for there was another young man after her, who was "such a beauty, and had a colour like—like—her scarlet shoal." As to the carrier, she couldn't bear him; but she liked a nice house and plenty of money, and if Thomas didn't come she wouldn't wait.

When we answered his letter, we perceived that she was much more anxious than before. We were to add, what she declared to be true, that her parents didn't like her to "keep company" with anyone who hadn't a settled home and trade. Thomas, we found, was only a journeyman tailor. Also, we were to add, that uncertainty made her unfit for work in her place. She said this with a grave air, and meant it, white lie as it was.

The upshot of it all was, that a few evenings after the dispatching of this letter, a lively demonstration on the part of Gip was heard,

whose barks and gambols were evidently the overflowings of a great joy. Thomas had arrived. Nelly's face proclaimed the news.

"Have you seen the carrier lately?" we asked.

"Deet, no; and I don't want to. Great ugly chap!"

"Remember you mustn't go against your parents' wishes, Nelly," we added, maliciously.

"They do be willing, miss. And Thomas do say you are writing beauty letters," she said, showing her teeth.

She lingered about until we asked if there was anything else.

"Beg your pardon, but if you 'ould just write my name clear on this paper, I 'ould be much oblige."

We wrote "Eleanor Morris" in large letters, and then she left the room.

A few days afterwards we picked up an old envelope covered with "Eleanor Morris" of every size and shape. It was impossible to say what the capital "E" was like, but we began to perceive that Nelly was practising her signature against the wedding. We thereupon made her a round-hand copy of her name, which greatly delighted her, and in course of time she wrote it respectably.

The wedding took place, and we lost one of the merriest, nicest servants we ever had. She was married from the house of her parents, and only left us the evening before the happy day. Two hours after the important signing that made her and Thomas one, they came to call on us. We were surprised, but were determined to be gracious and congratulatory. No sooner did Nelly perceive us, than she rushed towards us, and without "by your leave," most audibly embraced us. We were rather taken aback, and wondered whether Thomas intended to do us the like honour; but he was content with a "grip o' the paw," eloquent in its way. "I come to show Mary how he put the tea. She know nothing. Thomas, go you away," cried Nelly, as soon as our pretty speeches were ended.

And Nelly insisted on remaining to instruct the new maid, while her husband wandered off for an hour or so.

They went to live in a distant town, where Thomas set up tailoring on his own account. We lost sight of them for nearly two years, when one day we heard Nelly's unmistakable laugh in the passage. We rushed out, and there were she and Thomas, disputing as to which should hold a fair, fat baby, the image of Nelly. It was settled by her putting the infant in our arms with a shout of laughter, and a "there's for you, miss, *fach!*"

Thomas and Nelly were getting on in the world, and had now a smart shop, Nelly assured us, "with all kinds of beautiful waistcoat-patterns in the window, and large plate-glass panes." But she was as vain as ever, and not one whit less merry and pretty than when all the young men were trying which should get the brightest glance from her wicked black eyes.

AN INTERLUDE.

"HYACINTHIA said nothing. She sat nervously pulling the swan's-down off her fan, whilst Eustachio stood leaning against the mantle-piece, his eyes bent upon her."

So far had John Bryan written, and then he had laid down his pen, leaned back in his chair, and given vent to a prolonged sigh. He was a big man, with a plain, clever face, but he did not look like a writer of romance; nor did he feel like one, to judge by the relieved expression which overspread his features at the interrupting sound of a lady's voice in the garden below.

"John! John!" it called. "Can you come down? Rose has come home all of a sudden."

John went down immediately, and in the garden found his aunt, Mrs. Clifford, and her young step-daughter. The latter, a very pretty girl, fresh and blooming as the flower whose name she bore, had been away on a visit, and had but now most unexpectedly returned.

"How do you do, John?" she said, giving him her hand. "I did not want to disturb you——"

"Oh, I am not particularly busy, Rose," replied John, quickly.

"No? Then do help me plant these ferns. Mrs. Lyon gave them to me the last thing, but they ought to be seen to directly." So saying, Rose led the way to her fernery; John, carefully bearing the basket of ferns, beside her.

They had always been very good friends, these two—not cousins, but as intimate as such; and as Rose tripped merrily along by his side, John gave another immense sigh, and confided his trouble to her.

"I am writing a novel, Rosie," he said.

"A novel, John!" she exclaimed.

"Yes—a novel, or novelette," he explained. "It is to come out in three parts, in the *Riff-Raff and Helter-Skelter Bi-Monthly Magazine*."

"Oh! John, what fun!" cried Rose, laughing. "Fancy *you* writing for the *Riff-Raff*! You, of all people in the world! What induced you to do it? And, pray, *is* it written in Latin?"

"I wish it were," answered John, disconsolately. "No. The fact is, Bellairs and Tom Grey persuaded me to do it as a recreation: they thought it would amuse me after my hard work; but I assure you novel-writing is far harder work than anything I have done before."

"Poor John!" said Rose, with sympathy. "Tell me what it is about."

"It is the story of a girl—a very nice girl, called Hyacinthia, and a young man called Eustachio. I thought," said John, apologetically, "that people always had odd, grand names in novels, and I had to think for a week before these occurred to me. In fact, I very nearly wrote and asked you, Rose. Well, they met several times, and talked, and went to picnics, &c.; that part I managed pretty well, but now they have fallen in love with each other, and as Eustachio is going out to India, he wants to speak to Hyacinthia, and be married. And now they are at an evening party, and—and—I don't know what in the world to make Eustachio say."

"What should *you* say in a like case, John?" said Rose, archly.

"I!" cried stupid John. "But I should never *be* in a like case!"

"Well," said Rose, rather disappointedly, "but what is their situation, pray?"

"I *did* want you here, Rosie," said John. "Moreover, I went down and asked my aunt what a young lady might wear at an evening party, and as soon as she had told me, I ran up quickly, and wrote it down. Then I asked what she might be doing, and my aunt sent for one of your fans, Rose, to show me how she might play with it. And there," continued John, comically, "I have left her pulling the swan's-down off her fan; and he, Eustachio, leaning over her. But I can't leave them there for ever!"

"No, indeed," answered Rose, gravely. "There will be no swan's-down left soon."

"What *shall* he say, Rosie?" urged John, despairingly. "I'm sure my friends meant well, but they never set me a harder task."

Rose looked at the great scholar, the author of several very learned and valuable treatises, and smiled very tenderly.

"Can't he say," she suggested, "'My dear Miss Hyacinthia, will you permit me to address your father on a subject with which, perhaps, the dictates of your gentle heart already acquaint you?'"

"*Would* a man say it like that?" inquired John, dubiously.

"How should I know?" asked Rose. "But you must make haste, John, or Hyacinthia's chaperon will be coming to say the carriage is announced."

"Yes, it is dreadfully awkward; I must make him say *something*," said John.

"Or poor Mr. Eustachio will grow perfectly crooked—his is the most awkward situation of all," put in Rose.

"I wish one need not bring love into tales. Tom Grey told me it was indispensable: but the fact is, I don't understand it. And if you won't help me, Rose, I must give it up."

"Help you to understand the indispensability of love?" asked Rose, demurely.

"No, no, Rosie! Tell me what Eustachio is to say."

"If his name were *John*, or something common, I might improvise a speech," said Rose. "But Eustachio!—to make a Eustachio speak is too much! I must think upon it. In the meantime, let us set to work."

They had reached the fernery, and now began to busy themselves with the plants in silence, Rose now and then heaving little sighs, to which, however, John paid no heed. At length he asked abruptly why she had come home with so little warning.

Rose grew very red. "Ah, John," she said, "it was for such a foolish reason, I hardly like to say."

"What, Rosie! Not to an old friend!"

Rose cheered up a little. "Well," she rejoined, "I left because—because—somebody was there whom I didn't like."

"But how did that matter?" said John. "Could you not both go your own ways?"

"No," replied Rose. "At least, it seems he could not. He *would* like me, though I didn't like him. Was he not stupid?"

"Very stupid," said John.

Rose made no remark. At this instant a crashing noise sounded through the bushes, and a gentleman, with a pallid face and a very fierce expression, burst out of the shrubbery. Instinctively, Rose stepped back, and laid her little hand on John's arm; and, mechanically, he put his strong arm round her.

"Oh! John," she whispered. "It is *he*!"

"Good morning, Miss Clifford," said the apparition, advancing towards her. "Allow me to request five minutes of your time. As you left Mrs. Lyon's with scant ceremony, I have followed you to beg an answer to the question I asked you last night."

"I gave you one, Mr. Hill," said Rose, hastily. "I can only repeat what I said before."

"Repeat! repeat!" cried the stranger, testily, and starting forward. "You little flirt! you —"

"You keep back, sir," exclaimed John, in a voice of thunder, and tightening his hold of Rose.

"Oh! John, I didn't flirt, I really didn't. I think he's mad," whispered Rose, without any stops, and beginning to cry.

"On what grounds do you prevent my holding speech with Miss Clifford, sir?" cried the stranger, backing a little at the sight of John's stalwart frame and threatening attitude.

"And on what grounds, sir," demanded John, haughtily, "do you trespass in a private garden, and insult a lady?"

"Sir, you are most impertinent," roared Mr. Hill, trembling with anger. "I—chanced to see Miss Clifford here —"

"Sir, you will oblige me to extremities," replied John, who had

become quite calm. "Look here"—and he extended his right arm, still keeping his left around Rose—"if you don't go quietly away this very instant, I shall be compelled to throw you over the hedge."

"Sir! sir!" cried the little man, too much choked with rage to say more.

"Yes, sir," replied John, pointedly. "I said—*over that hedge.*"

"Sir, you are no gentleman," almost screamed Mr. Hill. "You, you——"

He could get no further. John made one stride forward, and Mr. Hill vanished. They heard him crashing back through the bushes, and then his voice called out, from a safe distance, "Sir, you have insulted me—I shall send you a lawyer's letter, sir!"—and then retreating footsteps sounded through the garden.

"Oh! John," said Rose.

"My dearest Rosie," said John.

No more ferns were planted that morning, although both stayed for a long time in the fernery; and when they returned to public life once more, Rose's hand was still on John's arm.

John went to finish his chapter before dinner, and Rose, according to promise, came to help; and it was wonderful, after this interlude, and with Rose looking over his shoulder, how glibly his pen seemed to glide.

* * * * *

"'Hyacinthia,' said he, 'my dearest Hyacinthia, I can't get on without you. And you—oh, Hyacinthia! do let me take care of you for ever.'"

"And Hyacinthia dropped her lovely head, and murmured——"

* * * * *

The dinner-bell rang, and the writer a second time flung away his pen. But whatever Hyacinthia was about to murmur to her Eustachio, we may be sure Rose had whispered to John during the interlude.



PARKWATER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN EXPEDITION IN THE DUSK.

MORNING dawned. A beautiful, sunny June day. Mrs. Fred Lyvett seemed pretty well: a bright morning is always good for the spirits. She got up and was nearly dressed, when she heard a noise, as of shaking, in the dressing-room. She sprang into it with a gesture of fear. Mr. Lyvett, with some coats on his arm, had hold of the brass knob of one of the closets, and was shaking to get it open.

"Oh, don't do that!" she uttered, seizing his arm.

"Why, what is the matter?" he inquired, for her face was nothing less than a face of ghastly terror.

"You may break the lock."

"Sophy, dear, what ails you?" he asked, looking at her attentively.

"Break the lock! Not I. And if I did, it need not put you out like this. This is a capital closet. I noticed it when I took the rooms. Lots of brass pegs in it, the very place for my clothes—as I and Mrs. Cooke decided. You will want the other one and the wardrobe. Where's the key of this closet?" he demanded of the servant, who appeared in answer to his peal at the bell.

"I don't know, sir," she replied. "It was in the door when we made the rooms ready yesterday."

"It is not in it now."

"I have not touched it, sir. I noticed last night that it was out, when I was putting the things straight."

"I must have it," said Mr. Lyvett.

Mrs. Lyvett interrupted. She had been standing with her back to them, one hand pressed on the dressing-table.

"Perhaps I took the key out," she said. "I can't quite remember, but I know I was looking in the closet. I will search for it after breakfast."

But even while she spoke these few words, she had turned her face away again to bury it in a drawer, and they could not see its shivering whiteness.

The maid left the room, and they went in to breakfast. When it was over, Mr. Lyvett rose. "Now, Sophy, this key."

"I will look for it by-and-by."

"But I want it now. I want to arrange my things at once. Otherwise you will be troubling yourself to do it."

"It will be no trouble."

"My dear, I shall do it myself. Be so good as find me the key."

She rose and left the room. But the moment she was in the bedroom, far from searching for the key, she sank down on a chair, wringing her hands; her whole appearance, her face, her attitude, bespeaking a state of wild alarm. Mr. Lyvett suddenly opened the door, and saw her.

"My dear Sophia, what *is* the matter?" A fit of trembling, violent as that of the previous evening, was shaking her now.

"What can it possibly be? You must have medical advice. When was it you experienced these seizures before?"

"It is nothing—nothing," she panted. "I did have them, some years ago. Frederick——"

"My love?"

"Do not tease me to look just now for the key. I will get it for you by this evening."

"Oh, never mind the key. My things will do any time. Think of yourself. I'll ask Mrs. Cooke to recommend a medical man, and we will have him in at once. She is sure to employ one in the neighbourhood."

He was hastening from the room, but Mrs. Lyvett arrested him by a gesture and a groan—for it could not be called a word. "Call no one," she murmured. "Let me only be quiet, and it will pass away. It is an attack of the nerves, brought on by fatigue."

He stood and watched her: and presently she arose, languid but composed. She took his arm, and they went back to the breakfast-room. Two dark circles were round her eyes, and altogether she looked as her husband had never seen her look. He gently put her into the easy-chair, and drew a footstool before her.

"Now I tell you what, Sophy; you must not stir out of that chair all day. And if the trembling comes on again, take some brandy-and-water immediately. It did you good last night. You shall not go travelling again, if this is to be it. Shall I remain at home with you?"

"No, oh no," she eagerly answered: "you could do me no good. I only want quiet. You know you have a great deal to arrange to-day, and several people to see. Pray do not neglect anything."

"Well, I shall not go home to dine this evening."

"You must go—you shall go!" she exclaimed, with a vehemence that positively startled Mr. Lyvett. "I tell you, Frederick, any worry would only make me worse, and it would worry me dreadfully to know that you neglected this first invitation of your father's. It might render the breach irrevocable."

"Good-bye, then," he said, stooping to take his farewell. "But I can tell you my going, or not going, depends upon whether you are better. And be sure don't get worrying yourself with the luggage to-day. The things can wait until to-morrow."

Mr. Lyvett passed down the stairs, and as he was crossing the hall, met Mrs. Cooke. He had known her many years. Her son, now dead, had been articled to his father's house. He stopped to shake hands, and they turned into the parlour.

"I am sorry to hear Mrs. Frederick Lyvett is not well," she said.

"Not very. From fatigue of travelling, I believe. She says it will soon pass off. I wish you would go up and see her, Mrs. Cooke. And," he added, dropping his voice to a whisper, "if you think it anything serious, just send for a doctor, and say nothing about it to my wife until he is here."

He took his departure for the day, and in a short time Mrs. Cooke went upstairs. The young wife seemed very well then. She received her landlady haughtily, not to say ungraciously; and spoke in a resentful tone of her husband's having thought she needed special inquiry or assistance. Mrs. Cooke perceived the illness was not a welcome topic, and passed to another.

"Did the countrywoman take away the child yesterday?" asked she, in a friendly tone.

"Of course she did," was Mrs. Lyvett's reply, looking steadily at her. And nearly at the same moment she was taken with a fit of coughing, and had to rub her handkerchief over her face.

"So Ann brought me word, when I sent up to ask if you would like some food for him. But—I do not know how my sight could so have deceived me. I saw her go away, and it seemed to me that she had nothing with her. Where he was hidden, will, to me, always be a mystery."

"He was asleep in her arms, under her shawl."

"Well, no, that could hardly be. Both her arms were hanging down. I noticed her hands: she had one brown cotton glove on, and was carrying the other."

"She would scarcely leave her child a present for me," returned Mrs. Lyvett, with a forced laugh.

Mrs. Cooke cleared her throat, and looked another way, speaking hurriedly. "The woman mentioned to me some particulars; and said she had brought the child to leave him with you. I regret much that she should have spoken, for of course it is no business of mine; but I beg to assure you that I shall never think of mentioning the subject to anyone."

"I'm sure I don't know what she said to you," was the answer, delivered in a curt, discourteous tone. "And it is of no consequence. She is a woman who is slightly deranged at times, and is then given to

say strange things : but nobody notices her. I have occasionally given her some money in charity, and that is what she wanted yesterday. The child is her own, her youngest ; but when the mania is upon her she disowns him."

Mrs. Cooke said good morning and betook herself to her own portion of the house. She found much food for reflection that day. Was she to believe the countrywoman's tale, or Mrs. Frederick Lyvett's? She inclined to that of the former, who not only appeared perfectly sane and sensible, but had honesty written on her face ; which Mrs. Lyvett had not. Moreover, the countrywoman's tale carried probability with it ; and the bringing back of the sixteen shillings, which she said she had been overpaid, corroborated it ; as did the little bundle of the child's clothes. It was a disagreeable matter altogether ; at least, that was the impression left on Mrs. Cooke's mind ; and somewhat mysterious. In the first place, Mrs. Cooke could have positively affirmed, if necessary, that the woman had *not* the child when she departed. Carrying it, she certainly was not ; yet where could it have been hidden ? Under her petticoats ? No. She was of slender make, and her lavender cotton gown hung down, flat and scanty, as peasants' gowns generally do hang. Yet it was equally certain that the child had gone, for Mrs. Lyvett could not have got him hidden in the house. How and when had the child departed ?—who had taken him away, if not the woman ? And yet, if Mrs. Cooke could trust the evidence of her own sight and senses, the woman had not taken him. Mrs. Cooke felt intensely mystified. However, as she repeated to herself, it was no business of hers, so she would not wonder any more about it. But the more she strove to follow this resolve, the less was she able to do it. The affair haunted her all day.

Frederick Lyvett came home in his cab to dress. How long that cab and horse would be his, he knew not : he was already making preparations for their sale. He had found a vast deal to do all day, what with one thing and another, and apologised to his wife for his long absence, as he stooped to kiss her, and hurried into the dressing-room.

He found the closet open, and his things placed nicely in it. His wife had done it. She appeared to have recovered, and she left her own dinner, just served, to go and talk with him. She begged of him not to leave his family for the sake of hurrying home, saying she should not wish to see him one moment before eleven. He was elated at her being so well, and descended at half-past six to his cab, which had waited for him. Mrs. Lyvett finished her dinner—with a very poor appetite, as it seemed—and had a cup of coffee brought to her.

The evening went on to dusk. Mrs. Cooke was shut in her back parlour, which opened to the garden, the servants were in the kitchen, when Sophia Lyvett, wearing a large shawl and carrying something

cumbersome, passed down the staircase in the gloom. Slowly and cautiously stole she, as if she dreaded even the creaking of a board, across the hall, whose lamp was not yet lighted, and out at the front door. She pulled the door to, but did not close it after her, dreading perhaps the noise it would make, sped through the gate, and turned towards the Regent's Park. The road lamp flashed on her face. Its features, as seen through her veil, were white as death, and her mouth opened with every laboured breath she drew.

She bore steadily on her road, but with difficulty, for she was not accustomed to heavy burdens. The road is tolerably lonely there; and every now and then, when not a soul was in sight, she leaned against a dead wall, or a railing, or a stone gate-post for rest. Once, when she was well-nigh exhausted, she sat down on a garden step. An unintentional movement displaced part of the shawl, and exposed what she was carrying. A curious-looking bundle, done up clumsily in some kind of black stuff, and tied round and round with enough string to make a ball. She had sat a minute when a policeman appeared, coming round the corner she had passed. She sprang up and darted away, helped on by unnatural strength.

She came to the Regent's Park; it was no great distance; and was entering it, when another policeman appeared, coming from it. She turned short round, and stood back against a dark wall. She knew her way quite well about the locality; for, before settling at Brompton, she had tried this neighbourhood, had stayed in it for two months, hoping to pick up pupils. The policeman did not see her; he turned off the other way; and as the echo of his footsteps died away in the distance, she went on again and entered the Park.

When she came out of it, her arms were free; what she had carried was no longer in them. Hailing a cab that chanced to be passing, she got into it, giving the driver only a word of direction: that of the road in which Mrs. Cooke's house was situated.

"What part of it?" he inquired.

"Drive on. I'll tell you when to stop."

She sat in it, panting and breathless, shaking as she had been shaking at home on the previous evening. She let the man drive past her house some slight distance, and then stopped the cab. The fare was very trifling, but she put half a crown into his hand, and walked *on*, away still from home. Cabmen, as a whole, are suspicious men, remarkably wide awake. This one glanced keenly at her face through her veil, and looked after her. Then he turned his horse round, and drove slowly back, looking out for a fare.

When the cab was out of sight, Sophia Lyvett turned and approached her home. No lights were in the drawing-room, so her husband had not returned. That was fortunate: she had not felt perfectly sure that he would not come home early, in spite of her injunction: but another

circumstance was less so. The door, which she had hoped to find on the jar, as she left it, was closed; and she could not get in unseen, as she had wished to do. The hour she did not know, but thought it might be half-past ten.

What should she do? She scarcely liked to knock and enter, and face the surprise as to her proceedings at so late an hour. An idea came over her that if she could go in with her husband it would be thought she had but gone out to fetch him. Yes, she would wait, and do that. The shutters of Mrs. Cooke's parlour windows were closed. So much the better: the prying eyes of that lady could not be upon her.

Sophia paced back along the garden path to the gate, and paused there, in the full light of the gas-lamp. At that moment a cab drove past. She did not recognise it; but the driver recognised her as the liberal fare he had recently set down. He had met another fare, a cab full, whom he was driving home. He turned round on his box, and noted the house: no fear that he would not know it again.

Another cab came up, a private one, and stopped at the gate. Mr. Frederick Lyvett's. Fred jumped from it, and his groom drove off immediately.

"Why, Sophia!" he exclaimed, in a very access of astonishment, as he entered the gate and encountered her. "Is it *you*?"

She laughed loudly. "I put on my great shawl, and came out to walk up and down before the gate, waiting for you. It was hot indoors, and the night air is pleasant."

But he seemed rather cross; seemed to think the proceeding an extraordinary one; and, while they waited for admittance, recommended her not to do it again. Sophia fancied that the servants stared curiously at her: nothing in the world is so imaginative as conscience. Both the servants were in the hall: the one opened the door to admit them, the other was speaking to her mistress. Mrs. Cooke was sitting in her parlour near the door, which was wide open.

"Good evening," said Mr. Lyvett, halting to speak. "A warm night, is it not?"

Mrs. Cooke rose and came forward. "Yes, it is, very warm. You caused us a fright, Mrs. Frederick Lyvett," she added: and Sophia, who was hastening up the stairs, felt at these words compelled to turn. "When Ann came up to light the hall-lamp, she found a beggar boy in the hall: a young man, indeed; a great, strong, ill-looking fellow. He pretended to ask for bread, but it is a mercy she saw him, or we might all have been attacked in our beds to-night."

"How did he get in?" quickly asked Mr. Lyvett.

"We could not imagine how," said Mrs. Cooke, "until we found Mrs. Lyvett was out. You must have left the door open," she added, looking at the lady. "If you will kindly take the trouble to ring when you are going out, one of the servants will be at hand to show you out

and close the door after you. Perhaps," she continued, smiling, "Mrs. Lyvett is not accustomed to London, and little thinks that the streets and roads are infested with thieves and vagabonds, ever on the watch for plunder."

"Oh, Mrs. Lyvett has lived in London all her life," was Fred Lyvett's reply. "Had you much trouble in getting rid of him, Mrs. Cooke?"

"No. I thought it best to conciliate the gentleman, and called the cook to give him some broken victuals. He then asked for old shoes; and I was obliged to threaten him with a policeman before he would quit the house."

"It is the police who are to blame," returned Mr. Lyvett. "What right have they to suffer these fellows to be prowling about the roads at eleven o'clock at night?"

"Oh," said Mrs. Cooke, "it is an hour and a half ago. More, I think."

"I hope you will not be troubled again with such a customer," concluded Fred. "Good night, ma'am."

His wife had run upstairs, and he followed her. The servant had also gone up with lights. "Sophy," he said, as the girl withdrew, "you must have been out a long while. Where can you have been?"

"Only walking about, watching for you. I told you so."

"Don't go letting yourself out again, my dear, in that odd sort of clandestine way. And at night, too! Ring the servants up and let them wait upon you. It is different here from that place you were in at Brompton. Mrs. Cooke is a gentlewoman, you know, and accustomed to proper ways. Besides, you are Mrs. Frederick Lyvett now; don't be afraid of giving necessary trouble."

Mrs. Lyvett turned the conversation off. She was very tired, she said, and should go on to her room and undress. Fred nodded, and said he would follow her presently.

She had no further attack of trembling that night. But she tossed and turned from side to side in wakeful restlessness: and, when she did get to sleep, she moaned and started so repeatedly that her husband obtained no rest.

"I am sure," thought he, "that honeymoon journey of ours must have been too much for Sophia! Travelling does upset some people; I suppose she's one."

CHAPTER XV.

THE CHILD.

ON the following Monday evening there sat in a room at Rotherhithe a small collection of country people, men and women. A discontented

expression was on their faces ; and not without cause. They were from Suffolk, intended emigrants to Sydney, who ought to have gone out of dock on the previous Saturday, but from some bad management, which they could not or would not comprehend, the ship was to be detained for another week ; and they rebelled at the delay.

"A-boxing of us up in this here wicked Lunnon, as is full of accidents and revellings !" cried a woman, who was spelling over a newspaper. "A poor innocent lamb they have been a-drownding of now. A pretty little fellow, with flax-coloured hair, it says."

"Read it out, Goody Giles," said some one of the company.

Goody Giles preferred to tell it. "He were found in a place they call the Regent's Park. A gentleman were a-passing along, and his dog jumped into the water and fished up a bundle, which they think had lodged on the side, without sinking. They got it out and opened it, and it were a poor little boy."

"When was it ? How big was he ?" inquired one of the men.

"It were last Friday morning, and he looked to be a-going on of two year," replied Goody Giles. "His frock and pinafore was of blue cotton."

Another woman, seated at the window, turned round her head. "What else do it say ?" she asked, in a quick tone.

"Well, I don't mind as it says much else. Tam, take the news, and look."

"Tam" took the newspaper, and ran his eyes over the account. "Yes, it does, mother. It says as there's a reward of £20 offered. And he had got on a shirt and petticoat clumsily marked 'R. P.' in grey worsted."

"Hey, Mrs. Thrupp ! what's the matter of you ?"

For Mrs. Thrupp had risen from her seat at the window, and stood as if petrified. "Forgive me if I'm wrong !" she breathed, "but it's just the likeness of little Randy."

"Thou foolish woman !" uttered her husband. "Thy thoughts be tied on nought but that little 'un, night and noon. Thee'll get crazy about him shortly."

"Randy wore his blue frock and pinafore the day I left him."

"For the matter of that, Mother Thrupp," interposed Peter Miles, "there be two or three hunderd children in blue frocks and pinafores in this town of Lunnon alone."

"And that's the very mark of his shirt and petticoat," persisted Mrs. Thrupp, paying no attention to the rebuke. "I thought his folks might be fashed at seeing no mark, for ladies is particular, and when I were a-mending up Thrupp's stockings, ready for the start, I took the needle and worsted, and marked his three shirts and his two petticoats ; R, for Randy, and P, for Penryn."

"R. P. is but common letters," interposed Robert Pike, "and stands for many a name. They stands for mine."

"Don't take no note of she, Robin," cried John Thrupp; "her head's turned with losing the little urchin."

Mrs. Thrupp said no more. But she took up the paper and read the account for herself. It stated that the bundle had been tied round with much string. Upon cutting the string off, and opening the enclosing stuff and the newspaper inside it, a poor little dead child was discovered, with a cord round its neck: and the cord, drawn tightly, was evidently the cause of death, not drowning. A fair little boy, apparently getting on for two years old, dressed in underclothing marked "R. P.," and a frock and pinafore of dark blue print.

Mrs. Thrupp noted the address of the police-station where application might be made, and the body of the child seen. When she was alone with her husband at night, she told him she should go and ask to see it.

"Thee'd never be so soft!"

"I must satisfy myself. Something keeps whispering me that it's little Randy. I told you his mother shook him and hit him, a'most like a dog a-shaking a rat."

"A pretty figure thee'll cut, a-going to own a drowned child, when thee gets sight on't, and find it's one thee never set eyes on afore!" exclaimed John Thrupp.

"It's only my time and a walk," remonstrated the woman; "and my mind'll be at rest. While we be kept a-waiting here, we have got nothing to do, now all our things is aboard."

The same evening that these several labourers and their families were conversing together, there appeared at the police-station mentioned in the advertisements, a shrewd-looking man, airily attired about the neck and waistcoat. He demanded to see the inspector.

"What for?" inquired an officer in attendance.

"Something touching that child that has been found," was the answer. "If I can't see the inspector now, I'll come again."

"Go in there," said the policeman.

The man went into the room indicated, and stood before the inspector: who heard what his business was, and inquired his name.

"John Ripley."

"Who and what are you?"

"I was well-to-do once, but I got down in the world, and I have lately been reduced to drive a night cab. I tried a day one, but I had to pay sixteen shillings to its master every morning before I took it out, and I could not make it answer. I pay six shillings for the night one."

"Its number, and its owner?" continued the inspector.

John Ripley satisfied him ; also in various other particulars, relating to himself. Some of his answers were written down.

"And now," said the officer, "what have you to say about this affair?"

"First of all, sir, I want to know whether the reward will be paid to me, if I point out the person who put the child in the water? Because that person," shrewdly argued the man, "may not have been the one who actually killed it."

"If you can indicate to us the individual who put the baby where it was found, and through that information the actual guilty party or parties be discovered and taken, you will be entitled to the reward."

"And receive it?" added the man.

"And receive it," said the inspector, with a checked attempt at a smile. "Now go on."

"Well, sir, last Thursday evening I took out my cab at nine o'clock, and for more than half an hour not a fare did I get. Then one hailed me, and I drove him all up to the Regent's Park, and onwards to the north side beyond it. I set my fare down, and was driving back, when a woman came out of the Park, put up her hand, and made a noise."

"How made a noise?"

"Why, she had tried to speak, but was so out of breath she couldn't, and only a noise came from her. I got down, opened the door, and she scrambled in. I have seen many a one make haste over getting into a cab," continued the speaker, "but I never saw one tumble in as quick as she did. She was like a hare that the dogs are after. 'Agate Road,' she said to me.

"What part of it?" I asked.

"Drive on," she said. 'I'll tell you when to pull up.' So I did as she told me, and ——"

"What time was this?" interrupted the officer.

"I can't say to a few minutes. Between ten and half-past."

"Proceed."

"I drove up the Agate Road ; and presently she pulled the string, and I jumped off and let her out. I thought I should get a shilling from her, but she puts half a crown into my hand, and goes away, on further, up the road."

"Is that all?"

"Not quite. I turned back with my cab towards the Park, plying for a fare, and had not gone far, when a gentleman, two ladies, and two children hailed me, and got in. *They* told me to drive up the Agate Road, and I did so ; when, in passing a house, beyond which I had driven her, I saw the same woman—or lady, whichever she was. She was standing inside its gate, looking up and down the road."

"Well?"

"That's all."

"Did you see more of the woman?"

"No. My last fare went to the very top of the Agate Road; and as they were getting out I took another, who wanted to go in quite a different direction."

"How do you connect all this with the finding of the child?"

"Why, sir, I feel a positive conviction, in my own mind, that it was that very woman who had been placing the baby in the water. She panted and shook as she came from the Park, like one in mortal fright, like, as I said, a hunted hare, and the moment she was inside the cab, huddled herself into one corner of it, like the same hare run down. And why should she conceal her house from me, and make me drive past it? She must have had some motive for that."

"These circumstances amount to very little," said the inspector.

"At all events, they look suspicious enough for the police to follow up," quickly retorted the man. "Which I suppose you'll do, sir."

The inspector kept his own counsel: as inspectors are sure to do. Neither eye nor lip moved. "What house was this?" he asked.

"I cannot describe it as you would understand, and I don't know its number; but I can point it out when I'm there."

"How was the woman dressed?"

"In a big, dark shawl, which nearly covered her, and a silk dress. And she kept a black veil over her face."

"Should you know her again?"

"I should know the dress: I'm sure I should. It was a grey silk, flounces edged with bands of black velvet. The shawl was a dark plaid, blue and green. I didn't see much of her features."

"What age was she?"

"Young."

"Was she like a lady, or a servant?"

"Like a lady."

The inspector wrote for a few minutes. "Are you always to be found at this address that you have given?"

"Except at night, when I'm out with my cab."

He continued to write. "Have you talked about this?" he suddenly demanded.

"I have never opened my lips about it till now. It was only to-day, when the account of the finding of the child came to my notice in the newspapers, that I began to have my suspicions."

"Good." The inspector touched a hand-bell, and a policeman came in.

"Begbie."

It was the only word he spoke, but the man appeared to understand ; for he withdrew, and another one appeared, in plain clothes. The inspector turned to the cabman.

"You will go with this officer," he said, "and point out to him the house you have mentioned. Do not linger before it, or turn your head to look at it ; just tell him which it is, and walk past it. You understand ?"

"I should be dull if I didn't," returned the driver.

"Mark it," was the inspector's brief direction to his subordinate.

(To be continued.)



WAYFARERS.

THE way is long, my darling,
The road is rough and steep,
And fast across the evening sky
I see the shadows sweep.

But, oh ! my love, my darling,
No ill to us can come,
No terror turn us from the path,
For we are going home.

Your feet are tired, my darling—
So tired, the tender feet ;
But think, when we are there at last,
How sweet the rest ! how sweet !
For lo ! the lamps are lighted,
And yonder gleaming dome,
Before us shining like a star,
Shall guide our footsteps home.

We've lost the flowers we gathered
So early in the morn ;
And on we go with empty hands,
And garments soiled and worn.

But, oh ! the great All Father
Will out to meet us come,
And fairer flowers and whiter robes
There wait for us at home.

Art cold, my love, and famished ?
Art faint and sore athirst ?
Be patient yet a little while,
And joyous as at first ;
For oh ! the sun sets never
Within that land of bloom,
And thou shalt eat the bread of life
And drink life's wine at home.

The wind blows cold, my darling,
Adown the mountain steep,
And thick across the evening sky
The darkling shadows creep ;
But, oh ! my love, press onward,
Whatever trials come,
For in the way the Father set
We two are going home.

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